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Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Digital Transformation

CLERK OF THE HOUSE
JUN 09 2023
OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT

DT: 6/2/3

June 7, 2023

Mrs. Jacqui Sampson Meiguel
Clerk of the House
Office of the Parliament
Cabildo Building
St Vincent Street
Port of Spain

Dear Mrs. Sampson Meiguel,

9th Report of the PAAC - The implementation of the 2021 budget with emphasis on the "Green Economy

Please refer to your letter of April 19, 2023 on the above matter.

2. The response of the Honourable Minister of Digital Transformation to the Comments/Recommendations of the 9th Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) - The implementation of the 2021 budget with emphasis on the "Green Economy is hereby forwarded for the attention of the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Cory Belfon
Permanent Secretary (Ag.)

MINISTRY OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
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Response of the Ministry of Digital Transformation to the Recommendations of the Ninth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriation Committee (PAAC)
Written Response, May 24, 2023

Recommendations of the 9th Report of the PAAC relating to the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Digital Transformation

Recommendations:

- *The MPA and the MDT should submit a status report to Parliament by May 31, 2023 identifying:*
  - *the benefits derived since the implementation of these practices;*
  - *the challenges faced during its implementation; and the successes since its implementation.*
- *The MPA should indicate the steps to be taken in the future to ensure the successful promotion of the technological practices in the public sector and submit to Parliament by May 31, 2023.*

During the period 2021 to present, the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) and the Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT) continued to champion, lead, facilitate, and support the infusion of Digital Technology into the operations of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT). The digitization of Government data and the digitalization of the business processes of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) is incrementally creating an enabling environment for the Digital Transformation of the Public Sector and its movement towards Digital Government.

This status report on the Recommendations of the 9th Report of the Public Administration and Appropriation Committee (PAAC) is submitted by the Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT), following discussions with the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA).

The Status Report outlines the initial state (Fiscal 2021), current state (May 2023), and projected future state of ongoing initiatives and programmes within GoRTT in the following areas:

- the development and deployment of e-Services as part of GoRTT's multi-channel service delivery;
- the development of internal technology solutions within MDAs to increase operational efficiency; and
- the adoption and incorporation of Green ICT into operations.

1. The Development of e-Services

One of the primary objectives of the National Digital Transformation Agenda is the improved delivery of e-services to customers as a part of GoRTT's multi-channel service delivery strategy. With a citizen-centric focus, this aims to improve the ease of doing business by reducing the cost and time for interactions with government.

The delivery of end-to-end e-services also offers additional benefits by eliminating or significantly reducing the need for creating and maintaining paper-based records. It also provides more convenience by removing the travel time previously required to physically travel to a government office to access the particular service.

The development of e-services is accomplished through the digitisation of Government Data, and the digitalisation of the business processes of the particular Ministry, Department or Agency offering the service. While it is acknowledged that within the MDAs, there are varying stages of readiness to deploy e-services, there has been incremental progress during the period Fiscal 2020 to Present which include the following:

A. Improving the Ease of Doing Business: the DevelopTT Platform

DevelopTT is an Online portal for the processing of development permits. The solution was launched in March 2020 by the Ministry of Planning and Development, in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, as a way of improving the Ease of Doing Business in Trinidad and Tobago.

Eleven e-services are currently offered through the main DevelopTT Portal:

1. Planning Permission: Planning Permission, Building Permits and other development approval can be sought using this service.
2. Public Application Register: This register is a searchable database of applications submitted to the Town and Country Planning Division.
3. Advertisement Application: An application for the display of any sign, placard, board, notice, device or representation for the purpose of advertisement.
4. Car Rental Correspondence: A non-objection request for the use land/ site as a small car rental facility.
5. Customs Bonded Correspondence: A non-objection request to create a customs bond area within a warehouse as storage for large quantities of alcohol.
6. Liquor License Correspondence: A liquor license is required for any person or business that wishes to sell alcohol, wines or spirits of any kind, on any land or in any building which can be consumed on or off of the premises.
7. Mining Application: Application for planning permission for mining (mineral and material extraction) and processing activities.
8. Status of Land Correspondence: A request for information on the status (land use policy and previous permissions) of a parcel of land.
9. Stamp Duty Exemption Correspondence: A request for information on the status (land use policy and previous permissions) of a parcel of land for stamp duty purposes.
10. Variation Request: Site-specific request for minor variations to the land use policy or site development standards.

11. Submission of Unauthorized Development Complaint: A complaint against any development of land which appears to have been carried out without the required final planning permission.

In May 2023, the Ministry of Public Utilities launched the DevelopTT e-Utilities module, which introduced three additional e-services offered by the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA):

- Applications for Building Development;
- Applications for Plumbing; and
- Applications for Sewer Connection.

Although the numbers of customers utilising the DevelopTT suite of e-services is expected to be relatively small, the overall impact of the programme on the Ease of Doing Business in Trinidad and Tobago is likely to be significant.

The DevelopTT e-services can be completed entirely online, and are a welcome addition to the growing number of services available under Government's Digital Transformation Agenda.

B. Implementation of a remote application process for Government Services

In April 2020, with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the requirement to temporarily close physical Government offices, the National ICT Company Limited (iGovTT) through its ttconnect service channel, began to use an email-in process to allow citizens to continue to apply for the services detailed below under the following Ministries:

1. Ministry of Social Development and Family Services:
    a. Senior Citizens' Pension
    b. Direct Deposit
2. iGovTT
    a. ttconnect ID
3. Ministry of Education
    a. Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE)
4. The Ministry of Finance
    a. e-Tax; and
5. The Ministry of Trade and Industry
    a. TTBizLink

During the period April 2020 to April 2023, 63,939 applications were completed for these six services.

C. Enabling e-Services: GovPayTT

GovPayTT is an online payment portal that facilitates digital payments across GoRTT through the use of credit and debit cards via a payment gateway. The system was first launched in March 2020 for the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. It has since facilitated payments for the Intellectual Property Office, additional Registrar General's Services, NIPDEC's eTender Payments and iGovTT's services.

Across these entities and services, to-date GovPayTT has facilitated:

- 197,340 transactions
- $20, 670,171.21 TTD revenue collection for GoRTT

D. Improving GoRTT Property Management through the launch of the PRESD system

The Property Management Division of the Ministry of Public Administration launched the PRESD portal on December 14, 2022. The first service allows private landlords to register properties for rental, lease or purchase by Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). This has provided access to the online submission of Request for Accommodation by MDAs as well as an online filing system that grants access to and review of all property files by PRESD, Legal Services. The property register now allows property owners to list properties for lease or acquisition by the state in a transparent manner. There are also online auto generated reports and statistics on government property rentals / leases and the facility to track property matters from the point of property listing to acquisition, lease or eviction, inclusive of maintenance issues by property owners and MDAs.

Benefits derived since the implementation of these practices

- Increased use of ICT for the delivery of GoRTT services as seen in the number of completed transactions.
- Clients who used the email-in services advised on the ease of doing business via the email-in process.
- Creating greater value for the clients by meeting since they do not have to leave home to submit their applications.
- The walk-in remains an alternative for those customers who prefer a face-to-face interaction.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic and the requisite physical temporary closure of GoRTT's offices, ttconnect was able to innovate and have a greater online presence for service delivery and information sharing.
- Increased use of the local developers' community since many solutions are provided with the assistance of technology SMEs.

Challenges faced during implementation

- Changing the mind-set of citizens to accept the transition from a physical in-person application submission to an email-in (trust in the ability for the MDA to provide the service)
- Customers not meeting the requirements of the service applications e.g., multiple emails sent for one application, email not being delivered due to large attachment size.
- Inability of some persons to use the new technologies due to limited capacity owing, inter alia, to age, limited literacy levels and/or digital skills.

Successes since implementation

- Buy-in and support from MDAs
- Highly satisfied customers
- Demonstration of the potential success for remote work.

2. The development of internal technology solutions within Ministries, Departments and Agencies to increase operational efficiencies

A. *EmployTT*

EmployTT is a platform that allows for the recruitment process of contract employees for all of GoRTT.. The solution is a central Software as a Solution service that can be easily adopted by government organisations. It allows for the advertising of jobs, submission of applications and shortlisting of the applicants. This fully digital process provides greater efficiency and optimisation in filling vacant positions.

This solution, which was first implemented in January, 2021 for iGovTT, facilitates the following 17 entities:

1. Elections and Boundaries Commission
2. Equal Opportunity Tribunal
3. Housing Development Corporation
4. iGovTT
5. Ministry of Digital Transformation
6. Ministry of Finance
7. Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs
8. Ministry of National Security
9. Ministry Of Rural Development And Local Government
10. Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
11. Ministry of Sport and Community Development
12. Ministry of Trade and Industry
13. National Infrastructure Development Company Limited
14. Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited (PSAEL)
15. Test Organisation
16. The Office of Procurement Regulation
17. Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation

From Jan 2021 to April 2023 the platform has facilitated:

- 380 jobs
- 34,730 applications
- 22,427 users

B. *e-Appointment*

e-Appointment is a platform for online booking of appointments for all of GoRTT and citizens or consumer of government services. The solution is a central Software as a Solution service that can be easily adopted by government organisations. It allows for the ease of doing business with GoRTT

and assists government entities in managing traffic flows, and monitoring and reporting their services and transactions digitally.

The e-Appointment solution was first implemented in May 2021 for the Registrar General's Department. It has facilitated 7 entities, 4 of which are currently active:

Active Institutions:

1. Intellectual Property Office
2. Registrar General's Department
3. The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs
4. ttconnect

Inactive:

5. Ministry of Health ERHA
6. Ministry of Health NCRHA
7. Ministry of Health SWRHA

From May 2021 to April 2023 the platform has facilitated:

- 203,536 appointments
- 81,517 users

Benefits derived since the implementation of these practices are:

- Reduced reliance on paper and/or physical files through digitization of records
- Improved service delivery to GoRTT clients
- Decreased potential loss of documents when files are misplaced.
- Improved speed of decision making, reporting and increased accountability.

Challenges faced during implementation:

- Post COVID, some Ministries fell back into a heavy reliance on physical service delivery.
- Embracing changes in processing and use of technology
- Enforcement of the revised and approved processes
- Inability to retain trained staff due to public service promotion rules.
- Identification of resources for continuous development and improvement through developer capacity at iGovTT and participating MDAs

Successes since implementation:

- Re-engineered Business Processes which lead to the identification of gaps within current processes.
- Adoption of a data-driven culture by MDAs, demonstrating advancement in the use of analytics for pro-active decision making.

3. <u>The adoption of Green ICT into Operations</u>

Green ICT practices are considered to be part of the environmental and social governance of Digital Transformation initiatives. To ensure sustainability and minimise negative and unintended environmental impacts of technology, it is intended that Digital Government increase focus on the following:

- Reduced use of paper: many Ministries have digitised their records, most notably the Licensing Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport, the Immigration Division of the Ministry of National Security and the Registrar General of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. These records are now easily accessible in secure digital format which reduces the need for paper and by extension the physical space and safeguards to support maintenance.

- Less travel: Through the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement, all MDAs have access to Microsoft Teams which has been utilised extensively throughout the pandemic to host collaboration and meetings within and among GoRTT entities. To date, this practice has largely been continued even as employees return to physical office spaces. This allows for less commuting and reduced carbon emissions. In the same vein, it will facilitate the ability to adopt structured Work from Home practices, which are currently being championed by the Ministry of Public Administration.

4. Future steps towards promotion of Green ICT initiatives in the public sector

The critical steps to be taken in the future to ensure the continued promotion of Green Economy practices in the public sector, in keeping with international obligations and commitments, must build upon the strides made in advancing digital service delivery and the increase in the number of e-services while prioritising the assignment of personnel and funding.

Specifically, activities can be focused in the following three (3) areas:
A. Strengthening Awareness and Education
B. Policy and Regulatory Frameworks
C. Monitoring and Evaluation

A. Strengthening Awareness and Education:

There is a need to raise awareness among public sector employees and stakeholders about the benefits of Green ICT initiatives. Training programs and educational campaigns can empower individuals with the knowledge and appreciation of the benefits to be derived from incorporating sustainable practices and leveraging green technology.

B. Policy and Regulatory Frameworks:

Comprehensive and integrated policies and regulatory frameworks that incentivise and support the adoption of Green ICT practices can be developed. These frameworks can encompass areas such as energy efficiency standards, sustainable procurement guidelines and records management.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation:

Regular monitoring and evaluation of Green ICT initiatives are crucial in assessing their effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. Key performance indicators should be defined to measure the environmental impact, cost savings, and efficiency gains achieved through the implementation of these initiatives.

By taking such future steps, the public sector can play a leading role in promoting Green ICT initiatives and driving the transition towards a more sustainable and environmentally conscious DigitalTT.