



Caribbean Telecommunications Union

Towards 21st Century Government

Citizen-Centric, Seamless Resilient Government

Abstract

This document identifies the rationale for and activities to be undertaken in building 21st Century Governments and specifies a methodology for establishing them in the Caribbean

Supported by:  **CARICAD**
Caribbean Centre for Development Administration
Advancing Public Services for the People of the Caribbean

Issue: 2
Date: 21st May 2020

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Towards 21st Century Government

1. Background

In March 2017, the CARICOM Heads of Government (CHOG) approved a Vision and Roadmap for the establishment of a CARICOM Single ICT Space to enhance the environment for investment and production in the Caribbean and to support the development of a regional digital economy. The vision articulated for Space is *“an ICT-enabled borderless space that fosters economic, social and cultural integration for the betterment of Caribbean citizens”*.

The Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) has consistently advocated that Governments must be early adopters of information and communication technologies (ICT), using them effectively to serve their citizens. This view presents a strong starting point of influence for the evolution to the CARICOM Single ICT Space, as effective ICT adoption by Governments is expected to catalyse a process that would result in widespread application and integration of digital technology across all sectors and into all aspects of Caribbean life.

In January 2018, the CTU launched its 21st Century Government initiative, a significant component of an overarching digital transformation thrust and the implementation of aspects of the CARICOM Single ICT Space. The impact of digital transformation is already evident in many countries, globally. Corporate entities are leveraging the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics and digital currencies for simplifying consumers' everyday activities. Since most governments are woefully lagging behind the corporate world in harnessing the power of ICT, it is not inconceivable that governments too must embark on a digital transformation process to revolutionise the way they interact with their constituents.

The CTU defines a 21st Century Government as one that is citizen-centric, seamless, resilient, open, interactive and efficient and makes effective use of ICT to deliver services to their citizens, internal and external clients. They are fit for purpose in the 21st century.

The CTU has been working with its member countries to design and build out government wide area networks (GWANs) as a critical foundation layer in this transformation process for delivering government services, digitally. However, the CTU is concerned that the applications and processes to optimally leverage the potential of the infrastructure are inadequate. 21st Century Government requires the development and implementation of digital government information systems and interoperability platforms to exploit the infrastructure fully.

Digital transformation is not only about the technology, but involves an overhaul of governance arrangements, institutional structures, work processes, organisational culture and public servant mindset. Building digital awareness and literacy skills in the public sector and the population are also critical to the success of this transformation process.

2. Historical Overview of Government's Relationship with Citizens

A national Government has a unique relationship with its citizens. It is the only institution that consistently interfaces with all citizens through every phase of life, from birth until death. Every citizen must be registered at birth, educated, find employment or register a business, pay taxes, register one's marriage, purchase property, license a car, receive health services, and ultimately, have one's departure from life registered. The Government, therefore, is uniquely and exclusively positioned to know its citizens and has a responsibility to create and maintain systems that efficiently service their needs and enable them to participate effectively in the development of the country.

Historically, the knowledge systems governments employ, are rooted in paper-optimised processes that support the operations of independent government ministries and agencies. These colonial systems are centuries old and are anachronistic in the information age. The citizen is required to provide his information to every ministry or agency with which he interacts, notwithstanding the fact that the information may already exist elsewhere in government records and often in the form of physical documents. This imposes unnecessary burdens of inefficient, time-consuming and costly processing, duplicated storage, repetitive processes, security risks, and lack of transparency in the delivery of government services to its citizens. A 21st Century Government will apply digital technologies to improve the delivery of services to citizens transparently, effectively and efficiently.

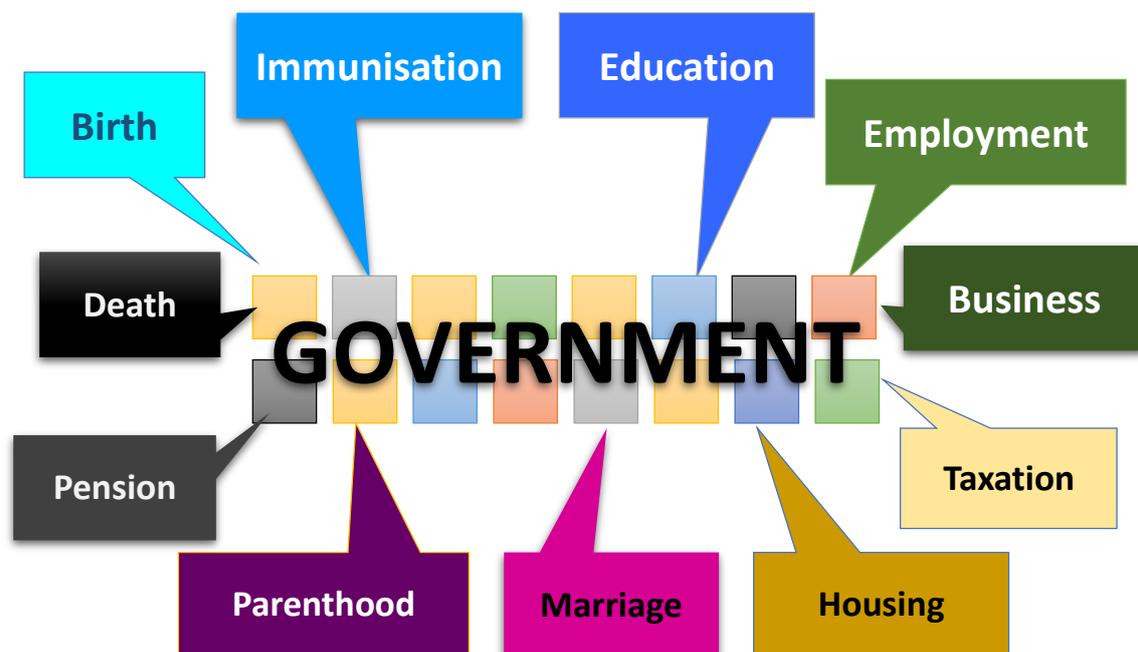


Figure 1: The Government and its Citizen

3. 21st Century Government

In this the second decade of the 21st century, government services must be personalised and responsive to enhance citizens' end-to-end experience of public services and meet their specific needs. It will require early adoption of ICT and the inculcation of a 'citizen-first' culture and mindset in service delivery.

The 21st Century Government model will make effective use of ICT to:

- Enhance the delivery, quality, adoption and usage of government e-services;
- Provide citizens with accurate government information and allow for their active participation in the public policy development and feedback process;
- Realise organisational transformation, cost efficiencies and interaction in government through the seamless sharing of systems, processes and information;
- Strengthen economic competitiveness by fostering an environment of collaboration with the private and business sectors to promote innovation and sustainable development.

The ultimate goal is to improve service quality, promote transparent and efficient interaction, enhance public trust in government, and drive better citizen experience.

Caribbean governments have been investing in ICT but their efforts have been in silos - ministry or agency-based, and not comprehensively addressing the whole of government and therefore not maximising the return on their investment. The benefits of investing in ICT are not automatic but require a champion and leadership at the highest level of government, with the political will to change existing mindsets, inspire citizens and to coordinate ministers and the activities of their ministries. There must be a focus on a citizen-centric, seamless (whole of government) approach to interacting with various constituents, which include government, citizens and business. This effort requires appropriate policy, legislation and regulatory reform and commensurate reengineering of processes. Importantly, staff must be trained and reskilled to take full advantage of the technologies.

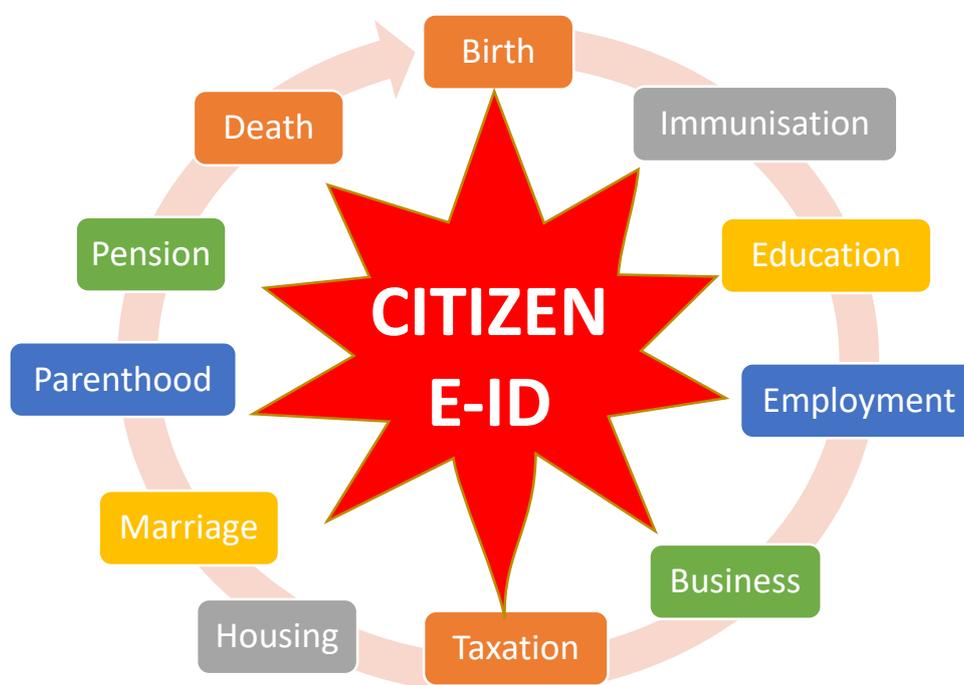


Figure 2: The Citizen and its 21st Century Government

The evolution of ICT presents the opportunity to create a comprehensive information profile of each citizen and their interactions with the Government. This profile will be exclusive to each citizen and associated with a unique digital identity (ID) to facilitate efficient, seamless and secure citizen interaction with the Government.

Figure 2 illustrates the data capture and effective use of the digital ID. The introduction of a digital ID system is crucial and a fundamental precursor to the systematic establishment of a 21st Century Government.

Governments must implement appropriate systems to mitigate the potential negative social impacts of a 21st Century Government. As they embrace digital technologies, new cyber vulnerabilities and other risks arise.

Governments have a responsibility to safeguard their citizens, enabling them to conduct business securely online. Governments must ensure that best practices are in place to protect citizens personal data and information and to discover and address any breaches expeditiously.

4. Characteristics of a 21st Century Government

A 21st Century Government is one that catalyses digital transformation and in which:

- Public servants are empowered, have the tools and capacity to operate in a digitally transformed public service;
- A digital identification system exists to enable citizens' secure access to government services;
- All government records and information are available digitally;
- Modern technology (including the cloud) creates reliable, resilient, sustainable and accessible repositories, on and off country for all Government information;
- A unified wide-area smart broadband network infrastructure, built on an enterprise architectural evolutionary approach, is deployed to function as a central and mission-critical component of the government's business;
- Interoperability frameworks ensure information is well-defined, can be integrated and is accessible across all government ministries and agencies;
- Business continuity plans are in place;
- Use is made of advanced data analytic tools for effective decision-making; to improve service design and personalise delivery;
- Open data portals and supporting policies are appropriately employed;
- A one-stop-shop for citizen services is created and maintained, along with social media and mobile platforms, as a means to interact with government, report concerns and provide feedback;
- e-participation tools are in use to encourage greater collaboration with citizens by involving them in decision making, policy setting, and problem-solving;
- There is a high digital literacy among public servants.

A 21st Century Government requires:

- A Head of State or Head of Government to champion, endorse and drive the national process;
- Political will and leadership at the highest levels of Government to ensure effective execution;
- An aware, engaged and digitally literate Public Service;
- Early adoption of cutting-edge ICT;
- Appropriate smart broadband infrastructure;
- An enabling policy, legislative and regulatory environment;

- Business process reengineering and robust project management as integral elements for implementation;
- Indigenous private sector organisations to contribute to the process and development of broad local capacity; and
- Engaging other stakeholders, including unions and other public-sector associations.

5. Building a 21st Century Government

The goal of building a 21st Century Government is indeed a complex undertaking. However, with political will and the determination to institutionalise appropriate governance structures and execute defined action plans, a 21st Century Government can become a reality.

The designated agency responsible for 21st Century Government must be able to articulate the challenges; define the priorities and objectives; design and plan appropriate programmes that would enable the achievement of goals; implement the programmes as well as monitor and measure the progress and impact. These processes will involve consultations with diverse stakeholders and must be supported by a comprehensive communication strategy that details the type and level of engagement of users, clients and beneficiaries. Periodic revisiting and appropriate adjustment of the processes will ensure the achievement of these objectives. The agency should report to the Prime Minister or highest level of authority in the country so that the 21st Century Government initiative remains focused on the whole of government approach.

Caribbean nations seeking to establish a 21st Century Government may have limited insight into the challenges and opportunities for effective ICT adoption. In such cases, benchmarking can be an essential tool for enabling effective decision-making and planning; building metrics for monitoring and measuring progress; developing best practices and evaluating utility, costs, benefits and impact.

The following Work Streams identifies the activities for achieving the 21st Century Government goal.

Preliminary Work Stream: Qualifications and Preparation of the Champion

21st Century Government requires a champion at the highest level of Government who will consistently articulate the principles and the goals. The Champion must:

- Demonstrate political will to initiate the programme and stay the course;
- Be prepared to transform established and cultivated public service behaviour and mindset;
- Embrace technology and its transformative powers;
- Identify priority areas;
- Keep citizens and public servants engaged and inspired;
- Keep Ministers on track;
- Commit financial and other resources;
- Keep regional vision in sight; and
- Collaborate with regional counterparts

Work Stream 1: Preparatory Environmental Studies

Conduct an environmental review that includes, among other things:

- Consultations with citizens, internal and external clients of the government and the private sector to determine challenges, and understand requirements;
- Identification of national priorities;
- Assessment of Government's processes and frameworks;
- 21st Century Government readiness assessment, including assessment of ICT knowledge gaps within the public service.

Work Stream 2: Create an Enabling Environment for the 21st Century Government

Reform existing frameworks to exploit the full potential of information and communication technologies. These include:

- Policies;
- Legislation;
- Regulations; and
- Government's public service procedures, regulations and operations on a progressive basis.

Work Stream 3: Build Out Broadband Infrastructure

Establish modern government broadband infrastructure and platforms to support the delivery of electronic services and:

- Adopts an enterprise architecture iterative approach for deploying government-wide infrastructure, interoperability frameworks and various interconnected platforms that are required to enable digital service delivery;
- Promotes appropriate technology to provide mobility, security and reliability and ubiquitous access for all citizens;
- Promotes the use of technologies that have the flexibility to be re-instated rapidly, enhancing government's business continuity and resilience, particularly in times of natural disasters;
- Supports and incentivise the use of shared infrastructure and facilities;
- Employs renewable energy sources, including solar power;
- Uses a virtual workforce to automate routine business processes, freeing up time and resources to focus on frontline services.

Work Stream 4: Know and Develop Your Citizens

Educate citizens, establish and maintain an appropriate information profile for each. The government will be required to:

- Develop and execute a progressive communication plan to build awareness and educate citizens;
- Establish integrated databases of citizen's information; and
- Create an Electronic Unique ID System to facilitate one-stop secure access to government services.

Work Stream 5: Know the Nation

Establish an interoperability framework for integrating databases of land infrastructure and Government assets, making use of GIS and satellite imagery.

Work Stream 6: Build a 21st Century Government

The basis of 21st Century Government is a digital Information profile for the country and citizens as depicted in Figure 3.

Work Stream 7: Inter-connect Caribbean 21st Century Governments.

Caribbean 21st Century Governments must be inter-connected to contribute to the evolution of the Caribbean Single ICT Space.

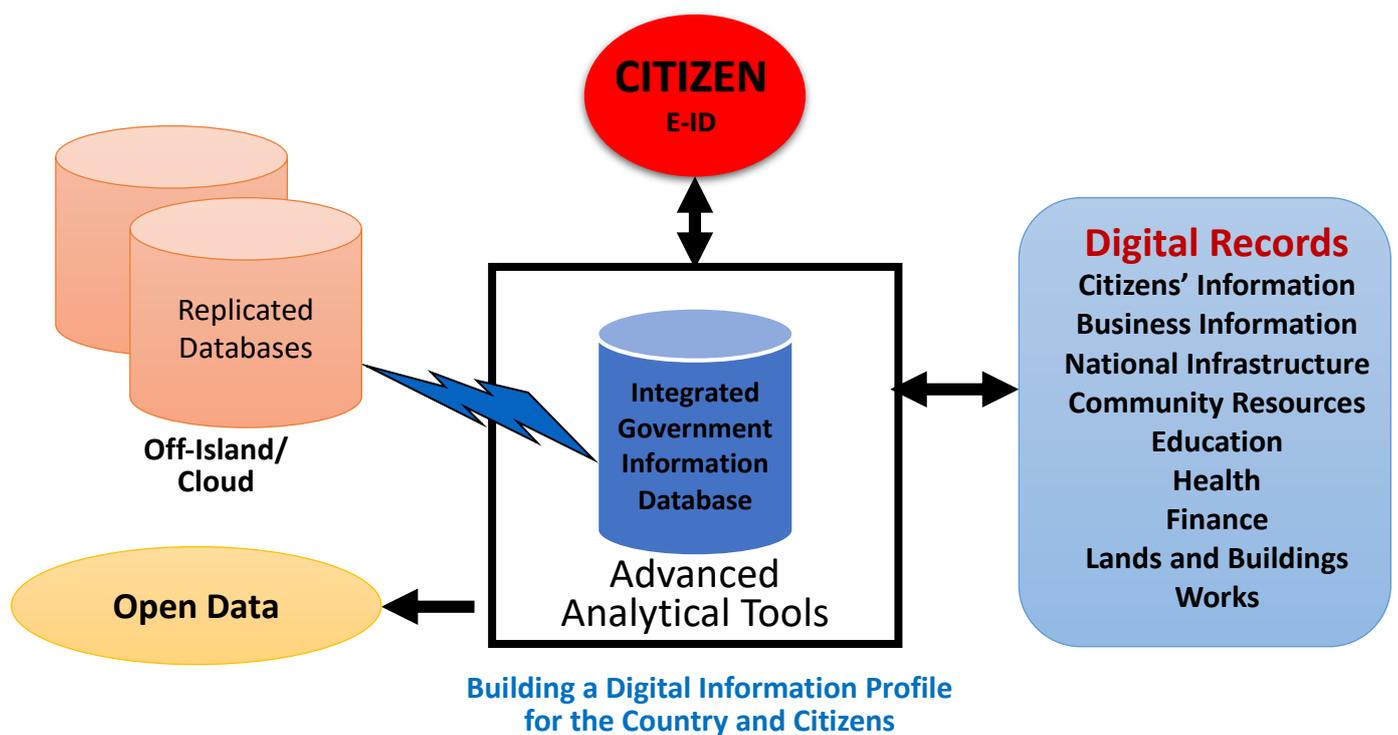


Figure 3

6. Benefits of 21st Century Government

The benefits of a 21st Century Government include but are not limited to:

- Improvement in the quality and scope of government services to citizens;
- Financial benefits to Government in the form of cost reduction and efficiency gains in the delivery of services and improved collections;
- Reduction of costs to citizens in accessing government services;
- Enhanced communications within government and between government and citizens/clients;
- Improved ease of doing business which increases the country's competitiveness and is an incentive for direct foreign investment;
- Greater transparency;
- Higher levels of innovation and local content development and usage;
- ICT as a critical value added sector and pillar of diversification for the economy; and
- More targeted and personalised service delivery, providing satisfied, engaged and better overall experience for citizens;

- Enhanced data and predictive analytics to provide governments with the insight to focus on prevention and targeted intervention capabilities to support smarter decision-making;
- Reduced fraud and misuse of public services and resources.

An added benefit that is of particular value to Caribbean countries is the possibility for restoration of government functions in the event of a natural disaster. By establishing collaborative relationships with other Caribbean governments, a 21st Century Government framework would support the repatriation of e-Government data to national government repositories and facilitate government business continuity.

7. Supporting the Caribbean in Building 21st Century Governments

The CTU has been advocating the principles in this document for more than a decade. However, its primary stakeholders (Ministers of Government responsible for ICT), while in agreement with the policies, typically, are not sufficiently empowered at the national level to drive the integrative processes necessary to advance to 21st Century Government.

Recognising that a champion at the highest level of Government is a mandatory factor for success, in January 2018, the CTU Secretariat in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting, Telecommunications and Information Technology of Antigua and Barbuda convened a Summit of Caribbean Heads of Government in Antigua and Barbuda, to explain the need for and to encourage them to be champions for 21st Century Government. The Summit of Caribbean Heads of Government:

- Presented the compelling ICT-enabled possibilities for new models of Government and development;
- Explained the successes achieved by Estonia and Georgia in this regard;
- Sought to change mindsets and engender the political will to embrace 21st Century Government;
- Explained the need for inter-governmental collaboration; and
- Advocated for champions in a coalition of willing countries to drive action.

There was a special appeal to Heads of Government of countries that had been devastated by the 2017 Caribbean hurricane activity. The disaster presented an opportunity for these governments to leapfrog to 21st Century Government.

A Symposium on 21st Century Government for public servants immediately followed the Summit to explain the requirements, the possibilities of enhanced effectiveness, efficiency and transparency in government operations and steps for migration.

The Symposium:

- Considered the ecosystem and environment necessary for 21st Century Government;
- Developed a systematic approach for establishing 21st Century Government;
- Presented a strategy to guide public servants;
- Formulated a high-level plan; and
- Suggested broad implementation timelines.

The Symposium identified the need to establish 21st Century Government benchmarks that would consider the characteristics of government (e.g. Citizen-centric, seamless,

resilient) to rank Caribbean countries by the extent to which they can implement the principles of 21st Century Government.

The CTU Secretariat committed to continuing its work to develop its members' government wide area networks (GWANs) while facilitating and coordinating the activities of other stakeholders to establish 21st Century Caribbean Governments.

8. Partners on the Journey to 21st Century Governments

The CTU Secretariat recognises the complexity of the activities that must be undertaken in the journey towards 21st Century Government. It will require the collaboration of many stakeholders. The CTU, therefore, has been working closely with the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD), the CARICOM institution responsible for public service transformation. While the CTU Secretariat addresses technology issues, CARICAD is responsible for the public service reforms for 21st Century Government.

CARICAD's vision for holistic public service transformation includes imperatives for efficiency, resilience and empowerment and a new approach to leadership development. Successful change will require a greater understanding of the machinery of the government as an open system and the definition of structures and systems that promote good governance to enhance the legitimacy of public policies, development plans and decisions at every level.

From their perspective, the concept of 21st Century Government has great potential to revolutionise the performance of Caribbean governments and revitalise democracy. It can fundamentally recast the connections between people and their government and between the Governments of the region; make government far more open and responsive to the needs of the people and allow them to actively participate in the democratic process.

CARICAD acknowledges that despite the evidence of existing skills in digital government in many government entities, the level of success in establishing 21st Century Government has been less than desired. CARICAD is of the view that there is a lack of cohesiveness, coordination and sustained action.

Given the precise alignment of perspectives, CTU and CARICAD are committed to working collaboratively to establish 21st Century Caribbean Governments.

The CTU Secretariat also proposes to engage other stakeholders in the journey. These include:

- Ministries responsible for ICT and Telecommunications and Public Administration;
- Other Government Ministries;
- Internet organisations;
- The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS);
- The Caribbean Network Operators Group (CARIBNOG);
- ICT Network Operators;
- The private sector, the justice sector, and other sectors with an active digital agenda.

9. Conclusion

The programme for establishing 21st Century Government in the Caribbean represents a unique opportunity for accelerating digital service delivery and transforming the public service. The CTU and its partners are ready and able to work with each country to facilitate this work which will require the collaboration of diverse stakeholders.

Ultimately, with champions and demonstrated political will, we can accelerate the journey towards 21st Century Government and reap the benefits of a digitally transformed Caribbean.