



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

Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration

Ministry of Digital Transformation Response:

3rd Report - An Inquiry into the Impact of Work-from-Home and Alternative Work Arrangements, Policies and Initiatives on Public Sector Productivity and Service Delivery

General Comments

The Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT) is responsible for the modernisation of the GoRTT Public Sector Service with respect to the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). To facilitate this mandate the Ministry works in tandem with many other partners including the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of National Security. The implementation of a work from home policy for the Public Service is multi-faceted and requires stakeholder agreements and adjustments in all respective policies and legislations. The MDT will therefore focus its response to the JSC on the ICT aspects of Work from Home as it notes that the other Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) responsible for Human Resource and Telecommunications and National Security matters will also provide their responses to the Committee.

The Ministry of Digital Transformation acknowledges that work from home options formed a significant stabilising effect for Trinidad and Tobago during the Covid-19 Pandemic. There can be no denying that remote work options are a desirable and perhaps necessary component of any modern labour force. However, the measures which were taken during this period were implemented during a global health crisis and as such were inconsistently applied across the GoRTT Public Service.



As noted in the JSC Report, the GoRTT MDAs are at different stages of ICT implementation in their business processes. Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) who have not digitised their backend processes, and existing records are at a significant disadvantage when attempting to roll out Work from Home Policies.

“In response to the question “what are the main factors and circumstances which hampered the transition to WFH or alternative work arrangements?” the most frequently mentioned challenges were ranked as follows:

- a. Insufficient technical or financial resources (42 instances);*
- b. inability to access files and documents (23 instances); and*
- c. the nature of work not being conducive to working from home (16 instances).”*

Pages 23-24 3rd Report - An Inquiry into the Impact of Work-from-Home and Alternative Work Arrangements, Policies and Initiatives on Public Sector Productivity and Service Delivery

The MDT recommends that each MDA conduct urgent internal work to digitise existing records and move from paper-based processes to digital.

“The majority of entities (75.86%) indicated that services have been partially transitioned to a digital platform. 3.45% reported that services were completely transitioned to a digital platform while 20.69% of entities indicated that services have not been transitioned to a digital platform.

The services most frequently transferred to digital platforms were application forms being made available for download and printing (40 entities) and customer service interactions (41 entities). Only 19 entities indicated that payments were transitioned to digital platforms.”

Page 32 - 3rd Report - An Inquiry into the Impact of Work-from-Home and Alternative Work Arrangements, Policies and Initiatives on Public Sector Productivity and Service Delivery

GoRTT has allocated significant funds to each MDA under the Public Service Investment Programme to facilitate digitisation and digitalisation. The Digital Government Programme has been allocated \$228,887,000 TTD for fiscal 2023 to upgrade MDAs ICT infrastructure and digitise service offerings. However, many MDAs have not yet enabled “end to end” digital processes. It is therefore



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

the position of the MDT that a general work from home policy cannot be implemented for the GoRTT Public Service at this time. Work from home can, however, be technically implemented once the guidelines in the recommended BYOD and Work from Home standards documents that are before GILAC for discussion are implemented.

The Ministry of Digital Transformation is partnering with individual MDAs to standardise ICT systems, platforms and processes to provide the technical capacity allow Work from Home wherever it is possible.

Work from Home policies may therefore be implemented on a case-by-case basis across the MDAs based on their particular level of ICT use and development.



MDT Specific Responses

AREA OF CONCERN: Projects and Initiatives to Digitise the Public Service

In the year since the MDT's inception, the Ministry has structured its work plan in three pillars; Digital Society, Digital Government and Digital Economy. The Ministry's primary focus in the past year has been citizen centric i.e., focused on the development of the Digital Society.

The Ministry specifically sought to accelerate transformation and minimise the disruption of the pandemic to the people of Trinidad and Tobago by allowing for a more connected society.

To 'Improve Access' for the general public the Ministry has opened six (6) new ICT Access Centres in the last fiscal and is in the process of opening twenty (20) more. These centres provide internet and computer access to underserved communities and are intended to assist vulnerable persons. The new locations are Belmont, Lisas Gardens, Caiman, Maitagual, Tacarigua, Maraval and more will be added before the end of the year.

Improving Connectivity is also fundamental to building a digital society. The MDT has been investigating new ways to connect our rural populations. Broadband in Underserved Areas via TV White Space (TVWS) is an emerging broadband technology that has the potential to expand internet access across the nation. As such the necessary authorization framework was approved on July 22, 2022 by the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT). Internet Service Providers will now be able to utilise this technology to improve internet coverage across all terrains.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the MDT and the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) was signed on the August 15, 2022 which allows the MDT to access their trainers and facilities to advance General Digital Skills. Thus far 1109 persons were trained at end of September on basic digital skills with a life skill component. This training programme will continue into the next fiscal and will ensure that our citizens have the tools they need to participate in our Digital Society. Baseline work has also been completed with CISCO on the launch of a Developers Hub co-branded CISCO Academy to meet the technical training needs of the local developer's community by the end of 2022.



As the Ministry moves into its second year, it is focusing on its second pillar; Digital Government. As the pandemic restrictions have eased, the GoRTT is seeking to learn from the past two years and re-engineer business processes for improved efficiency.

The MDT has been engaging its stakeholders – the MDAs to learn how GoRTT can improve services. One concern raised by many MDAs is that processes are manual and paper based. The MDT is working closely with MDAs to digitize their processes. This however, relies on the work of the MDAs in digitising the paper files that are already in use. The Digitisation of paper in itself has raised the dual issues of Storage and Security.

As part of the solution to the challenges of Digitisation the MDT is proposing the implementation of a Government Cloud and Data Centre which can securely house MDAs information. Currently the GoRTT leases space from various private sector data centres. To keep citizen data secure it is necessary that Government have a dedicated facility for sensitive information. A Hybrid cloud will be implemented which will include at a minimum the infrastructure needed to support the e-ID and interoperability framework. Currently the MDT is seeking through CAF and EU grant / technical assistance funding for the e-ID/Interoperability/Data Centre/Cloud Programmes up to US\$2.5M.

The main goal of the Digital ID programme is to improve the ease of access to services and doing business, which contributes towards building a digital nation.

The MDT aims to provide a secure and trusted e-ID (digital ID) to all citizens, residents and documented immigrants to access government and eventually private sector services. This will enable the public service to deliver its services at an individual tailored level based on the specific needs of each and every citizen.

The Ministry is in the process of developing a technology solution which will enable the interconnection of the various business solutions which exist across MDAs. The interoperability programmes will provide highly secure links between MDAs using proven technology such as public key encryption.

The Digital ID and Interoperability programmes seek to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of all data stored in government repositories and its secure accessibility by the interoperability framework.



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

The MDT has engaged the Estonian ICT Cluster, the UNDP, the ITU and the Government of India to provide GoRTT with technical advice and guidance. The UNDP is funding the design, specification and development of the first Proof of Concept of the e-ID Mobile App (aimed at completion in December 2022).

The Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT) proposes to establish an omni-channel solution and to brand the same as its Integrated Support and Service Centre (ISSC). The ISSC will serve its various publics, inclusive of the GORTT's employees through a range of traditional and digital modes of communication (channels) including but not limited to, Voice (Inbound and Outbound), Email, SMS, WhatsApp, Webchat and social media. The ISSC is designed around the philosophy of "no wrong door" which promotes the standard that regardless of the channel used, a trained advocate will answer and provide the required technical and non-technical responses.

The ISSC solution will be scaled up to allow GoRTT employees to receive technical assistance and also to track matters affecting employee performance.

The ISSC will prioritise employees of the GORTT who are on Work from Home (WFH)/Alternative working (AW) arrangements for faster resolution of work related or work impacting issues.

Where advised of outages by the participating MDA, a chatbot will be used to proactively contact the affected workers and provide continuous feedback to resolution. Where necessary, employees' supervisors may require them to report in and to use a hot desk for the outage period.



AREA OF CONCERN: Digital Technology for Employee Performance Management

Data driven decision making is a guiding principle for the Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT). Accordingly, the MDT is in the process of undertaking a current state assessment of the use of digital technology across the Public Service.

This assessment has three (3) key activity components as follows:

1. Comprehensive review and documentation of the current Information Communications Technology (ICT) stack (Infrastructure, Databases, Applications, Connectivity, Cybersecurity solutions) across the Public Service.
2. Establishment of a comprehensive digital catalogue of the ICT stack across the Public Service that can be used for Whole of Government (WoG) digital infrastructure planning.
3. Assessment of the use of the current ICT stack along critical impact points in the public service delivery journey.

At the end of the assessment process, the MDT will submit a report on the findings to Cabinet and provide recommendations and next steps. These next steps are intended to include information on performance management software solutions and other available technology-based opportunities for employee management.

The MDT will remain guided by the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) and the Service Commissions Department (SCD) and all other relevant stakeholders as to what HR measures can appropriately be introduced into the GoRTT Public Service Environment. These measures can then be enforced through the appropriate technology solutions and actioned by the aforementioned ISSC.



The assessment exercise is already in progress and is being conducted over a six (6) month period.

Assessment Timeline & Associated Activities



Components of the Digital Catalogue Of The ICT Stack Across The Public Service





TECHNOLOGY IMPACT POINTS

Along the Public Service Delivery Journey

I INTRANET	C CONNECTIVITY	R REGISTRY	D DATABASES	S SOFTWARE	C CONTACT
<p>Systems for internal staff communications and updates.</p> <p>Telephony Systems : Cloud, Branch and Remote office.</p> <p>Systems for secure remote access, VPNs, online collaboration.</p>	<p>Connectivity between branch offices.</p> <p>Internet Connectivity and Redundancy.</p> <p>Security of local and remote network connections.</p>	<p>Registry system and process for Remote access.</p> <p>Digital Document Management systems.</p> <p>Secure Registry remote access and tracking of file updates.</p>	<p>User Data input points and forms format.</p> <p>Scanning and analysis of user data workflows.</p> <p>Secure Data storage arrangements, on and off premise.</p>	<p>Software and applications used to deliver services.</p> <p>Software versions, open source, proprietary licence fees.</p> <p>Office productivity software (Qty and Type)</p>	<p>Channels for providing customer feedback and updates.</p> <p>Helpdesk, Chatbots, Customer contact channels.</p> <p>Contact center systems.</p>



AREA OF CONCERN: Security of Information

The Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT) has developed and submitted two draft policies to the Government ICT Leadership Advisory Council (GILAC) for review i.e.; the 'GoRTT Work from Home' and the 'Bring Your Own Device and Acceptable Usage' policies. Once approved, employees will be required to agree to the terms and conditions of the policies, which are in accordance with the three principles of information security; confidentiality, integrity, and accountability.

The 'GoRTT Work from Home' policy was written specifically for employees who will be candidates to work from home using the MDAs issued devices (laptops/desktops/workstations). The 'Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and Acceptable Usage' policy is intended for employees using their personal devices to conduct work on behalf of the Government.

Employees are expected to keep information confidential and are expected to abide by approved methods to protect confidentiality of documents; including the signing of Nondisclosure Agreements/Confidentiality Agreements. It is the MDT's understanding that the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) will issue a complementary work from home Human Resource (HR) policy which all employees subscribing to the work from home facility will be required to sign and agree to the terms and conditions. This is to be managed by the MDAs dedicated ICT Divisions and Units; and the MDT will advise on the technical standards to be followed by all of GoRTT.

There are existing consequences to Public Sector Employees for disclosure of confidential information, whether this information is accessed from digital or paper-based sources; and it is expected that the MDA will conduct an assessment in advance to determine which functions can be conducted remotely without and/or minimum disclosure of confidential information.

Additionally, employee failure to comply with the terms and conditions under 'Enforcement' of the policy can be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with labour laws and legal guidance.

The MDT will remain guided by its partnering agencies as to which ICT measures are to be implemented, in keeping with relevant labour legislation.



AREA OF CONCERN: Legislation

The MDT has continued to work with TATT on pursuing required amendments to the Telecommunications Act Chap. 47:31. The amendments are required to enable, inter alia, the strengthening of the competition regulation powers of the Authority; more streamlined authorization procedures for the provision of telecommunications and broadcasting services; and more robust regulation and enforcement of statutory obligations of telecommunications and broadcasting service providers. In that connection, the draft Telecommunication Act Amendment Bill and supporting draft Telecommunications Act Amendment Policy have been reviewed by the MDT and the Authority, with a view to submission to Cabinet for approval within the first quarter to early second quarter of fiscal 2023, ahead of subsequent laying of the Amendment Bill in the Parliament.

Consistent with the foregoing, the MDT and TATT, in furtherance of more effective regulation of broadcasting concessionaires, have undertaken to pursue the finalization of the Draft Broadcasting Code. The draft Code, once finalized, is to be submitted to Cabinet for approval by the second quarter of fiscal 2023, ahead of subsequent laying in the Parliament for approval by affirmative resolution.

MINISTRY OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION