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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS

The Bahamas E-Services

Citizens at the Bahamas gets seamless access to government services.

Inspired and aided by Singapore, a world leader in e-government, the Bahamas has engaged Infocomm Development Authority International (IDAI) and Toppan Ecquaria to strengthen its IC infrastructure and improve online service delivery in Bahamas.

This is a significant step towards a "fundamental" shift in providing public services for the citizens. This long-term government initiative involves substantial investments but with huge valuable gains.

Toppan Ecquaria partnered with IDAI to collaborate with the Bahamian government to manage the overall e-government programme deployment in the country.

Business Challenge:

Integrate online services to simplify business-government interactions.

Solution:

Offering an IT-enabled services industry which allows secure, seamless service delivery across all levels of government, using online technologies to simplify and streamline small business interactions with government departments.

Results:

- Citizen inquiries can be processed in a streamlined, compliant way.

- Large volumes of documents and forms can be scanned, pre-sorted andautomatically allocated to the relevant application.

- Content management and collaboration system.

- Convergence in government policies and business models.

Challenge:

In a six-months study conducted, the findings found that Bahamas lacks "government-wide information and communications (ICT) plans, an ICT governance structure, and a unified government-wide citizen identifier system or a government-wide e-payment gateway.

There is also scarcity of ICT manpower and lack of integration between government agencies. Therefore, following IDAI initial recommendations, the set up of Department of Information Technology and an Information Communications Technology (ICT) committee was launched. The two departments were focused on developing and pursuing a "national ICT vision" with defined strategic outcomes and measurable performance outcomes.

The Bahamas government believes that investing in the e-government project will catapult the nation forward in the delivery of services to the Bahamian public.

Impact:

An Interoperability framework, enabling regulatory environment

Each Bahamian citizen will be provided with a "unique citizen identifier" number, and the Government will implement an "e-payment gateway" to facilitate online payments for the services. This greatly empowers a total shift that will free Bahamians from the archaic system to which the nation has become accustomed to.

The Bahamas government's first batch of online services was launched in July 2011. These includes Payment of Real Property Tax, Renewal of Driver's License, Vendor Inquiry (payments, invoices, purchase orders) and Application for New Business Licenses.

> *An integrated public service sector, armed with functional information technology tools, will improve responsiveness to the public. With these benefits, it will soon change the culture of doing businesses and providing public services within the nation.*
>
> *- Mr Zhivargo Laing, Minister of Finance*

The change meant that there will be a change in workflow, change of skills-for some people, and giving as much training as possible so that they will have adequate knowledge to operate in an environment where technology is driving the nation.

This will be a fundamental change that can tremendously impact the country's economic growth aided by a cutting-edge technology.

For more information, please visit www.toppanecquaria.com