



## Chapter 2

### Accelerating Social and Economic Development through the use of ICT

*A National Undertaking with  
Roles and Benefits for Everyone*



## 2. ACCELERATING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE USE OF ICT



### Vision 2020

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has initiated a progressive vision to transform the country into a developed society by the year 2020.

In presenting “Vision 2020”, Prime Minister Patrick Manning stated that “the vision of Trinidad and Tobago becoming a fully developed country means that all citizens will enjoy a high quality of life in all areas including housing, health, education, transportation, telecommunications, water and electricity”. Mr. Manning added “it is envisaged that the society will be one which is inclusive, cohesive and caring with strong spiritual and ethical values, imbued with a deep sense of nationalism. The Government will be effective and exercise good governance with integrity in all spheres of public life, while the public sector agencies will be efficient, results oriented and customer focused”.

### Seizing the Opportunity of the Global Information Society

A major facet of Vision 2020 is the development of a strategy to facilitate the transformation of Trinidad and Tobago into a knowledge-based society through the effective use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ICT is a term given to the integrated use of informatics, information and communication tools and infrastructure to assist in the development of knowledge and the resulting acceleration in social and economic development. Knowledge has always been at the core of human progress and endeavour. Yet now, as never before, individual and collective ability to create, share and utilise knowledge has become the driving force in

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shaping all our futures. Today, the dramatic increase in the volume, speed and ubiquity of information flow that has been made possible through ICT has already brought about profound changes in the demands and expectations upon government, business, civil society and the individual.

By harnessing the potential of ICT, in all areas of human life, national and local governments can now provide new and better responses to vital and longstanding issues, such as poverty reduction and wealth creation, as well as education, equity and social justice.

To be competitive in today's connected world, a nation must learn not only how to produce and sell better, but also how to manage its wealth of knowledge. Countries must find ways to generate new knowledge, translate information into knowledge that is useful for development goals and business competitiveness, and effectively capture global information and apply it locally. It is impossible to participate adequately in today's global economy without proper information and knowledge management as a fundamental part of all productive and commercial activity. The increasing importance of knowledge in economic development demands that a sustainable learning society be established in conjunction with any national economic development plan.

The new forms of world interconnectedness offer unprecedented opportunities for all countries - particularly emerging nations such as Trinidad and Tobago. There is also a threat, however, which presses everyone to act as quickly as possible. Due to the rapidity of technological change, the cost of *not* participating is also rising daily, thereby widening the gap between the "connected" and the "disconnected" and increasing the difficulty of closing that gap as time goes on.

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## **Trinidad and Tobago's National ICT Strategy**

Prime Minister Manning formally launched Trinidad and Tobago's National ICT Strategy on May 2, 2003. In his speech to launch the initiative, Mr. Manning emphasised, "ICT sits at the core of everything we must do to improve the efficiency, productivity and competitiveness of our nation. ICT has those ingredients which, if employed properly,



could make this sector of our community not only a generator of national prosperity, but an instrument of economic and social justice in Trinidad and Tobago”.

The Prime Minister set out a number of clear outcomes to assist in advancing the ICT agenda, including:

- Development of a world-class telecommunications and computing infrastructure;
- Further liberalisation of trade in the telecommunications sector;
- A “quantum leap” in the development of e-Commerce within the country – with specific emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises;
- Easy and efficient access to electronic government information and services;
- The development of Community Access and Computers for Schools Programs;
- Nationwide training, awareness and sensitisation in the areas of computer literacy, Internet usage, e-Commerce and associated technologies.

An ICT Steering Team has been established under the chairmanship of the Minister of Public Administration and Information. The Steering Team has been mandated to develop the National ICT Strategy that will support the achievement of the country’s development goals.

The National ICT Strategy is to present a detailed roadmap and series of related actions by which Trinidad and Tobago will achieve key development objectives through the expansion, growth and leverage of a world-class ICT sector.

Five Working Groups have been appointed to focus on key elements of the Strategy:

- *Human Resources* – including Community Access, Computers for Schools, education and skills development etc.
- *Economy and Finance* – e-Commerce and the development of the ICT Sector
- *Government* – the electronic delivery of government information and services

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- *Infrastructure* – the provision of accessible, effective and affordable levels of connectivity, hardware and software
- *Legal* – the provision of appropriate enabling legislation and policy

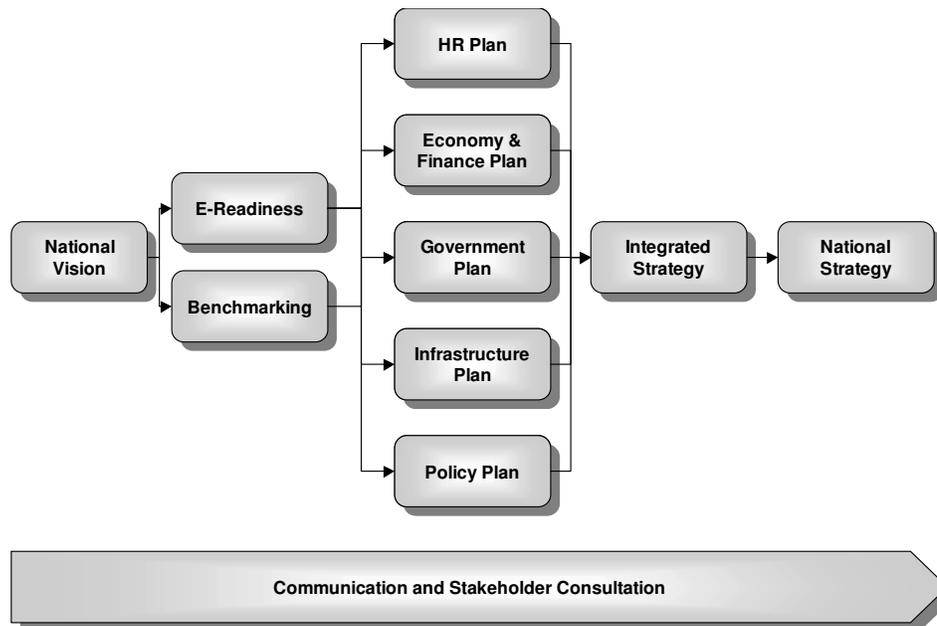
Recognised leaders from the public or private sector chair each Working Group. Membership of each group comprises of highly experienced and knowledgeable individuals from the national community, each one having a specialised understanding of their respective Working Group's area of focus. The Working Groups have been structured to ensure broad representation and participation by public sector, private sector and civil society. Composition of the Working Groups is shown at Appendix F.

Development of the National ICT Strategy was set an aggressive five-month timeframe – May to September 2003.

## ICT Methodology

The ICT Planning Secretariat utilised a traditional ICT development methodology to help direct the project. The methodology comprised of five key stages:

1. Development of a National ICT Vision
2. Establishing the current state of ICT using:
  - a. An internal e-Readiness assessment
  - b. Benchmarking against comparator countries
3. Developing Action Plans for each of the five Working Groups
4. Development of an integrated National ICT Strategy
5. Presentation and acceptance of the National ICT Strategy



### National ICT Development Methodology

An environment of openness, collaboration and broad stakeholder participation was employed throughout the strategy development process. This helped ensure that all opinions were heard and considered as the plan took shape. The National ICT Secretariat developed a website ([www.nict.gov.tt](http://www.nict.gov.tt)) where all documents were posted for comment and feedback prior to being incorporated into the final documents.

