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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Trinidad and Tobago's National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy is a comprehensive plan that leverages the power of people, innovation, education, information technology and infrastructure to accelerate social, economic and cultural development. The Strategy complements and builds upon Vision 2020, and will play a central role in Trinidad and Tobago becoming a knowledge-based society and achieving its goal of developed country status.

It is a broad and far-reaching Strategy that will provide tangible benefits for everyone within the country. It has been designed in a highly inclusive and transparent manner, actively involving hundreds of people from civil society, government and the private sector. It is a plan for the country's future – designed by the people of the country.

Trinidad and Tobago's National ICT Vision is *“Trinidad and Tobago is in a prominent position in the global information society through real and lasting improvements in social, economic and cultural development caused by deployment and usage of information and communication technology.”*

The objective of the country's national connectivity agenda is to:

- Provide all citizens with affordable Internet access;
- Focus on the development of children, and adult skills to ensure a sustainable solution and a vibrant future;
- Promote citizen trust, access, and interaction through good governance; and
- Maximise the potential within all citizens, and accelerate innovation, to develop a knowledge-based society.

The spirit of Trinidad and Tobago's Connectivity Agenda is captured in the following values:

*Connected. Committed. Competitive. Creative. Caring. Community.*

A domestic and global analysis of Trinidad and Tobago's current level of “e-Readiness” was carried out to provide a baseline for the development of the Strategy. The analysis identified several barriers that are presently inhibiting increased levels of ICT usage amongst the general population



and business. Barriers include high cost of computer ownership, high cost of Internet access, modest Internet speed, and virtually no community access to computers and the Internet for those who cannot afford home PCs. Currently, only 16% of homes have computers and only 9% of the general population consider themselves regular Internet users. As there are very few people on-line there has been little rationale for local businesses to use the Internet to buy or sell goods. Consequently, Trinidad and Tobago's electronic marketplace is very underdeveloped at this time. And, although there are plans for increased levels of ICT in education, it is not widely used in schools, either as a tool or as educational content at this time.

Five Working Groups were established to develop key aspects of the ICT Plan – Human Resources, Economy and Finance, Government, Infrastructure and Legal. The Working Groups met at regular intervals during the planning process, to share their ideas and to identify the numerous dependencies and important points of integration across the five areas of focus. Individually, the Plans are comprehensive, creative and connected – all are integrated with, and dependent upon, one another to achieve their goals. Collectively, they provide a blueprint for an exciting future and a realistic roadmap for getting there.

Highlights of the National ICT Strategy include:

- The *Community Connection Programme*. An initiative to provide hundreds of Community Access Centres in every part of the country. These Centres will provide everyone in the community with an on-ramp to the Internet and access to a broad range of information and services.
- A *Youth Computer Corps Programme* to select and train young adults to work alongside volunteers in each of the Community Access Centres. The *Youth Computer Corps* will not only help build new skills in the local population and workforce but it will also create entry-level employment opportunities that can translate into continuing employment in the ICT sector – a key element of the National ICT Strategy.
- Opening up the telecommunications market to full competition, starting in 2004. Open and effective competition in the telecommunications sector will increase service quality and variety while reducing cost. The result will be faster, cheaper and easier access to the Internet and a marked increase in computer and Internet take-up amongst the general public and small businesses.



- The introduction of a range of tax, and other fiscal incentives, to encourage increased PC ownership by the public and business community.
- By 2008 it is envisioned that over 50% of homes will have personal computers and affordable Internet access, and over 50% of the population will consider themselves “regular Internet users”.
- By 2008, over 50% of companies will use the Internet as a business tool.
- *The Knowledge, Innovation and Development (KID) Programme* will provide up-to-date computers and connect all 636 of Trinidad and Tobago’s schools to high-speed Internet service by 2008.
- The *KID Programme* will establish educational content and well-defined programmes at each level of the academic system whereby children’s achievements and capabilities in ICT can be formally measured and continuously improved.
- A customised training programme to equip teachers with the necessary skills for a more ICT-intensive approach to education will be put in place.
- The *Computers for Schools (CFS)* initiative has been identified as an innovative mechanism for maintaining computers in schools and Community Access Centres. The programme will provide additional employment opportunities for scores of people and assist in developing new skills that will help grow the country’s ICT sector.
- The *Skills and Knowledge for the Information Era (SKIE) Programme* will incorporate a range of initiatives aimed at training and job creation for those outside of the formal educational system – with a focus on the development of skills in adults.
- By 2008, the *LibraryNet* Programme will provide all libraries with computers and high speed Internet access, and all librarians will receive ICT related training.
- The country’s drive for increased levels of connectivity in schools, communities and government will result in significant growth opportunities for local suppliers of computers, software, Internet, installation and repair services and training.
- An ICT Industry Association will analyse the feasibility and resulting strategies for the introduction of new business areas such as call centres, software development, data processing, computer assembly and technology parks that will arise from increased electronic interaction.



- Government will also evaluate the feasibility of attracting a large ICT “anchor company” to the country such as a major software, computer or technology component manufacturer.
- *Student Connections* will place specially trained students from university or community colleges in small businesses or non-profit organisations to assist with the adoption of ICT.
- A programme of specialised training for IT professionals and senior managers will also be prepared. This programme will help senior business people better understand how ICT and the Internet can be effectively applied as business tools to increase productivity, profitability and organisational effectiveness.
- By 2006, all government information will be available on-line – placing particular prominence on topics such as jobs, education, health, and advice for small business.
- By 2008, all government services that are appropriate for on-line delivery will be available over the Internet.
- Government will also review, and amend where necessary, the necessary legislation required to support effective, secure and protected electronic transactions.
- Advisory bodies such as a *National Innovation Council*, *e-Business Roundtable* and *Infrastructure Taskforce* will be assembled to provide advice and guidance and ensure the country’s connectivity agenda advances effectively.

An initial funding estimate of US\$82 million has been identified for the design and implementation of the ICT Strategy over the next five years. Exact funding requirements will become clearer as each of the various programmes and projects are designed in greater detail. Government will be working closely with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to discuss funding and partnership arrangements.

A series of "Pathfinder Projects" have been identified. They will be introduced over the next twelve months and will provide a solid platform for accelerating the country’s connectivity agenda in subsequent years. The Ministry of Public Administration and Information will play a central role in the coordination and integration of the numerous programmes and has identified a dedicated Permanent Secretary to lead the national ICT agenda.

The National ICT Strategy has been designed to benefit everyone in Trinidad and Tobago. It will provide children from the earliest age with new skills, learning and development opportunities. It will bring communities closer together. All citizens will be able to use ICT in their



everyday lives, and will have easy and rapid access to information that is important for their social and economic well-being. Young adults will play a prominent role. They will acquire new skills, share these skills with others in the community and prepare themselves for an exciting and prosperous future in the information era. Important government services will be available at anytime, from anywhere. Small businesses will soon become e-businesses and will be able to compete in arenas that were traditionally only open to larger players. Trinidad and Tobago's ICT sector will expand significantly, thousands of new employment opportunities will be created and investor confidence will continue to grow.

The National ICT Strategy provides the blueprint for a self-sustaining, knowledge-based society. It will be a major contributor in the country's drive for a prominent position in the global information society, and provide Trinidad and Tobago with a giant stride towards developed country status.

