Government of Grenada

e-Government and ICT Status Report

Prepared By: Vincent Roberts
Please Respond to:

Vincent Roberts  
ICT Coordinator  
Office of the Prime Minister  
St. George’s  
Grenada, W. I  
Tel 473-409 9604 (Mobile)  
Tel 473- 440 2265 (Office)  
Fax 473-440-4116  
Email: vincent.roberts@gov.gd
Introduction

GRENADE

Three islands, Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, comprise the independent State of Grenada, a member of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

Known as the spice island for its centuries-old spice plantations and the abundance of nutmeg, cinnamon, clove and other spices, the country’s economy was completely devastated by Hurricane Ivan in 2004, causing damages estimated at US$815 million, more than 200% of the nation’s GDP.

Population 105,747 41% Urban  4,300 in largest city (St. George)

GNI USD 396,546,080  USD 3,750 per capita

Overview of Grenada’s ICT Sector

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) represents the fusion of computers and telecommunications. Computers enable people to work creatively. But they are limited by what they can access. Adding a communications channel, such as the Internet or other information services, significantly extends the capability of the computer. It allows it to be not only an inexpensive communications device. It can also become a means of obtaining education, information, and working creatively with others irrespective of geographical barriers.

Grenada’s ICT sector is growing as customer awareness and more importantly use of ICT increases. The high penetration of mobile technology (90%+) with its companion data services such as Internet access and messaging has help to exponentially grow demand for ICT services. This demand has spilled over to the Information Technology (IT) sub sector as more sophisticated services are demanded like Voice over IP (VoIP), Web Sites and E-Commerce solutions. This mass of potential customers represents a real opportunity for service providers who can provide cost effective ICT solutions.

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Government ICT/e-Government Policy

The ICT policy started with an initiative to liberalize the Telecommunication sector and with the merger of ICT the policy was included into the other areas. Although a great deal of work is still pending to formulate a comprehensive ICT Policy.

The Grenada Government has designated this decade as the "Knowledge Enhancement Decade with the specific objective of

“At least fifty percent of our human resources [must be] engaged in high-value knowledge-based activities, including information and communication technology, financial services, agriculture, tourism, sport and entertainment"

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) was described as a significant, novel and effective factor to propel performance and sustainable growth of the Grenada economy and aid in poverty alleviation. Human resource development is also envisioned as a real sustainable benefit of the implementation of the Government’s ICT strategy and action plan.

“The Plan will seek to put information and communication technologies (ICT) at the centre of Grenada's economic development as a dynamic industry sector in itself, and in support of the development of other sectors of the economy.”

In addition the Government has clearly stated its intent to encourage the private sector to be partners in developing and implementing the infrastructure required, assisting with developing the human resources, providing jobs and in taking on development activities.

Prior to the devastating effects of Ivan Grenada had begun the implementation of an ICT plan that included the formation of the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission and a government entity called the Central Information Management Agency (CIMA). Unfortunately and due to Ivan's devastating effects on the country the Government’s policy priorities changed and this has resulted in much of the plan still to be implemented.

However, recent activities have suggested that there is going to be renewed focus on the Government’s ICT development. The recent commitment of funding by the Indian Government for the development of E-Government is anticipated to provide the resources required to implement this aspect of the overall ICT strategy plan. By extension it is hoped the project will stimulate growth and investment in the ICT sector of private industry. The E-Government project as envisioned in the ICT Strategy Plan
could provide many opportunities for development of ICT skills within Grenada and provide a welcome boost to the ICT industry if the private sector is invited to participate.

**E-Commerce**

Adapting to the relatively new era of E-Commerce has allowed many businesses in the developing world to realise rapid and significant growth leading to major increases in net profitability. This however is not the case in Grenada and it can be attributed to the low penetration of computers and the high cost of connectivity.

The government through a European Union funded Information and Communication Technologies Project under SFA 2005, has set up a Virtual Business Incubator called EcomGrenada (http://www.ecomgrenada.com). The overall objective of the EcomGrenada project is: “To support agricultural and economic diversification by further supporting development of alternative economic activities in the agricultural and other productive sectors.” The project purpose is “to improve competitiveness of the agricultural and other productive sectors in Grenada through the introduction and sustainable use of Information and Communication Technologies.

The application of E-commerce technology is also making the products of businesses such as the Grenada Chocolate Factory (http://www.grenadachocolate.com/) open to the world market giving the opportunity of higher sales and turnover.

With the new VAT legislation to be implemented in February 2010, it is likely that both Government Civil Servants and VAT payees will need to become more ICT literate so that a suitable computer-based VAT accounting system may be realised. Without such ICT innovation, it is likely that full and fair VAT collections will be difficult/near to impossible to achieve.

**Island Wide Internet Access**

A Government initiative is looking at the provision of a low cost Internet Connection Capability for all Grenadians; with Island wide connection being made available to all citizens via such facilities as local internet cafes and community centres. This will provide motivated individuals the facilities to become ICT literate and increase training and local business opportunities.

All of the above would combine to make Grenada a very attractive base for Information and Communication Technology based companies – provided that the current high cost of high volume internet access is markedly reduced to match the lower costs that exist in most other nations.

**International Investment**
The Government of Grenada is considering a PPP project for the leveraging of ICT for the development of the country. It is expected to provide immediate opportunities for growth. The project includes the proposed development of the government's E-Government portal, linking all government offices and departments and the establishment of an ICT Industrial Park specifically designed to house ICT based industries. This facility is hoped to encourage local and foreign ICT investment.

Central Information Management Agency-CIMA

Based on the vision of new NDC administration, which is to develop Grenada into a leading member of the Information Society, using ICT for greater efficiency and involvement of citizens in the sustainable development of the country and a mission statement embodying the intrinsic objectives of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), a strategy and action plan which was developed is now being reviewed. The plan outlined the phases and steps necessary to achieve e-government, e-business, and e-commerce objectives that will mobilize Grenada into a cyber environment that will increase the efficiency of government interface with the public at large, create new employment opportunities, and attract foreign and local investors. To achieve this goal, a managing body should be initiated to assume full accountability for the integrity of the plan, and to ensure that its implementation is guided towards the ICT objectives outlined. The body that is being proposed to carry out this function is the Central Information Management Agency – CIMA. The Prime Minister is responsible for the Portfolio of ICT for Grenada. The Central information Management Agency (CIMA) under the Prime Minister’s Ministry is responsible for the implementation of ICT initiatives in the Country.

Policy Framework and Development Strategy or Agenda

The first formal ICT Strategy was prepared by the Prime Minister’s Office, based on the vision to develop Grenada as a knowledge-based society by 2010. The outcome was the plan: “Information and Communication Technology – A Strategy and Action Plan for Grenada 2001-2005”. In 2006, it was renewed for a further five years, 2006-2010 but with a recent change in government (July 2008), it is being reviewed to reflect the policies of the new administration.

Legislation

We are working on draft legislation specific to ICT and e-Government, electronic commerce, digital transactions, data security etc. There is work on a Freedom of Information Act and there is a Consumers Protection Act in place. (http://www.ecomgrenada.com/vlc/ebusiness_grenada/7_laws.asp)
E-Government

Grenada is also advancing in setting up an ICT infrastructure to support the Public Sector Reform Program and improve the government agencies` efficiency and coordination. These advances include:

- Establishment of the Central Information Management Agency (CIMA),
- Automation of processes within the Ministry of Finance.
- Initial Deployment of a Governmental Intranet Network.
- Acquisition and deployment of hardware for access and capacity building.
- Limited training.
- Negotiations are underway with the Government of Jamaica for the adaptation and implementation of a custom version of Jamaica`s Customs Information System.

Education and e-learning

This is most important to build a robust strategy to build at country level capacity building in terms of support to the infrastructure and ICT initiatives taken at the country level. Government recognizes that ICT training facilities is critical for imparting various basic and intermediate training programmes, which are nonexistent at institutions in Grenada along with state-of-the-art facilities for providing services through video conferencing. It has also been seen that several public and private institutions are willing to get involved in offering various IT related activities; however, the need to synergize these offerings to cater to the basic needs of the citizens through the usage of ICT is most important in imparting high end ICT training.

Information Technology is a powerful tool for accelerating economic development. Developing countries has focused on the development of ICT during the last two decades and as a result, it has been recognized that ICT is critical to economy and is as a catalyst of economic development.

After detailed deliberations it was perceived that there is need for setting up of ICT Centre for Excellence and Innovations (CEI) in Grenada. The CEI will have state of the art Data Centre, IT Centre & Virtual Reality Lab. The feasibility report has identified the existing infrastructure and suggested the topology/architecture of the proposed project.

Government of India has signed a MOU with the Government of Grenada to provide a Grant of USD 900,000.00 (USD Nine Hundred Thousand) for the setting up of ICT Center for Excellence and Innovations (CEI) at St. Georges, Grenada.

STATE OF PUBLIC SECTOR ICT INFRASTRUCTURE
Grenada mirrors the typical Caribbean public sector ICT asset deployment whereby most of it is located in the revenue collection and disbursement agencies of the government. In this case, the Customs and Accountant General’s Department are the leading agencies. A significant pocket of ICTs supporting central government operations are also located in the Grenada Government Ministerial Complex, which houses multiple ministries and agencies of the government.

A telecommunications network comprised of Local Area Network (LAN) segments - some virtualised - and connected via wide area network (WAN) links provided by LIME give users in the various ministries and agencies access to the several computerised and automation platforms that support GoG operations. The platforms are housed principally in the Accountant General’s data centre located in the Financial Complex and at other operational sites managed by the Customs and Inland Revenue Departments respectively. The network electronics that provide the virtual connectivity layers are generally best of class and as this class of equipment goes, probably in midlife. The best estimate is that there are about 500 PCs of various makes and configurations that are connected to the various GoG-provisioned networks. It is generally acknowledged that the available bandwidth for application and Internet access is less than adequate to the needs of the agencies.

Not all areas of government operations are connected to the Internet. The Financial Complex and the Ministerial Complex are served Internet access with about 3Mb of bandwidth provisioned by various technologies. Other areas of the government either do not now enjoy centrally provided bandwidth or access the Internet by inferior means, most likely via dial-up or standalone DSL connections.

The ongoing automation of central government operations is supported by three major computerised platforms:

- **SIGTAS** which supports the operations of the Inland Revenue Department
- **Smartstream** which principally supports the financial administration of the government of Grenada vested in the Accountant General and Ministry of Finance
- **Asecuda** which supports the Customs Department

The applications are back-ended by two major relational database systems – Oracle for SIGTAS and Sybase for Smartstream - and are estimated to support a combined 450 users. Microsoft Desktop Productivity Suite appears in various versions and configurations and appears to be widely deployed and in widespread use across the government. There is unanimity on the need for pervasive training on the use of the productivity suite and a general orientation towards utilising ICTs in government at all levels.

By virtue of the services provided and the potential to extract additional ones, the Smartstream platform has the greatest possibility to become the principal operating
support platform for the Government of Grenada. But this milestone is predicated on significant tactical and strategic configuration changes as well as a rollout philosophy. A small ICT Support Team centred in the Accountant General's Department (AGD) is custodian for the Smartstream platform. The production version of the platform was slated for upgrade from V6.5.3 to V7 by November 2008. Not all of the possible Smartstream modules were in production but the intent was to in production; [General] Ledger; Payables; Cashiering w/ Cash Drawer partially implemented. A custom check printing application with distributed printing capabilities has been added. The check printing utilize security paper but the printer[s] itself is [are] not securitized. There is centralized blank check stock management also. This application is utilized to print c. 1,000 fortnightly wages and pension checks.

The AGD intends to move to full rollout of all Smartstream modules in V7: Budget, Payables, [General] Ledger, Funds Control, Purchasing, Payroll, Cashiering w/ decentralized Cash Drawer and a partial Human Resources Management module, beginning with the Training Module. The staff knows that there is a data management deficit coupled to inadequate storage and backup management and the increased risk of a catastrophic failure of the central platform. But the operations management is hampered by a lack of qualified database administrator in the AGD. They now depend on freelance help from another GoG agency or an external supplier. The ICT professionals have been independently implementing Cognos, a Business Intelligence package which has the capability to provide government with strategic just-in-time decision-support information but their implementation is hostage to funding and low level of interest in the higher administrative layers of government. They believe that a collaborative implementation with Barbados and Anguilla public sector entities would pay very valuable dividends for Grenada.

**Challenges:**

The high cost and limited availability of broadband connections to the internet is the main challenge. This is quickly followed by the high cost of access devices.

Additionally, privacy and security are concerns of most citizens as well as legislative and regulatory issues.

**Summary**

The desired state is to transform the nation into a “knowledge Based” society. The vision and mission forms the basis of the ICT Strategy and Action Plan for country. The expectation is that investment in ICT will fuel economic growth and help fast-track targets to achieve our ultimate goal which is to provide job opportunities, improve public sector efficiency and productivity, encourage an environment of entrepreneurship, leading to the eventual reduction in national poverty and to increase citizen participation in government.