

**This report describes the current status of the various key portals in the Singapore Government. It also discusses the various drivers of change, the future development and challenges in shaping the next generation portals.**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The Singapore journey began in 1997 with the conceptualization of eCitizen aimed at delivering useful information and online services to the citizens according to their viewpoints, not according to the organizational boundaries of government agencies.

The citizens could first use the portal at primary (elementary) school and throughout his life manage key life events from learning, career counseling, getting a job, booking a date for his marriage, moving house, all the way to attending to the elderly. All these are part of sub-portals (also known as towns in eCitizen) like Housing, Health, Family, Library, Education, Business, Employment, Transport, Defence and Law & Order.

eCitizen is owned by the Management For Excellence Office, Ministry of Finance (MOF) and project managed by Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), the ICT arm of the Government. Each town is managed by a lead agency. For example, Ministry of Trade and Industry is the owner of Business Town while Ministry of National Development owns Housing Town. Each of this agency is responsible for flourishing the sub-portals from content-rich delivery to greater interactivity and more end-to-end transactions. By end FY 01, approximately 76% of all feasible e-services will be available on the Internet.

## **2 DRIVERS OF CHANGE**

### **Vision**

The eGovernment Action Plan<sup>1</sup>, launched in June 2000, laid out 5 strategic thrusts to support the vision to be a leading e-Government to better serve Singapore and Singaporeans in the new knowledge-based economy. One of the strategies is to *Deliver Integrated Electronic Services* by creating e-services that are integrated, customer-centric and accessible online, anytime, anywhere.

### **Governance and Management Framework**

The governance structure put in place, consisting of both users and technical advisors, has driven the public service forward. At the strategic level, the e-Government Policy Committee consisting of senior management and chaired by Head, Civil Service charts the direction for e-Government while the Public Service

Infocomm Steering Committee sets policies for ICT implementation and ensures coordination across civil service wide initiatives.

Forums such as the half-yearly PSI Forum and the quarterly PSI Seminar keep the public stakeholders updated with the latest ICT development and service-wide initiatives. The Town Owner's meeting is another forum to meet, share best practices and exchange experiences.

### **Citizen Orientation**

In July 2001, 5 focus group discussions were held to gather feedback from different segments (professionals, housewives, students, elderly) of the population. Key issues raised were:

- the need to revisit the rationale of policies and procedures
- the need to streamline them where possible, to integrate e-services and provide them from a single access point
- to deliver via different channels and in other languages

All these inputs will spur on improvements to our portals.

Half of the Singapore homes have Internet access, attributed to a highly ICT-literate population and affordable Internet subscription fees.

For the less savvy group, the Ministry of Manpower and IDA has spearheaded the National IT Literacy Programme (NITLP)<sup>2</sup> to train on basic computing and Internet skills so that their quality of life can be enhanced. The government is committed to ensuring that no one on the wrong side of the digital divide is disadvantaged. In this regard, a nation-wide initiative to wire up the island with Internet access points at commonly accessed locations like Community Centers and Community Development Councils (CDCs) is in progress. Full-time or volunteer staff will be present to guide residents in using these Government e-services.

## **INCENTIVES**

### **Funding**

As part of the eGovernment Action Plan, a total of US \$1 billion was committed for ICT deployment in the public sector over a 3-year period from year 2000. To-date, 33.7% of the fund has been approved.

In addition, a separate PS Online budget was set aside to specifically accelerate the development of e-services.

For experimentation of innovative technologies to reap new benefits or significant improvements to the delivery of public service, funding could be sought from The Enterprise Challenge Fund.

## OTHER MEANS

### Legislative - Electronic Transaction Act (ETA)

The ETA seeks to provide the necessary legal framework to create and foster a secure environment for the development of electronic commerce in Singapore. ETA was effected on 10 July 1998. The focus was to allow government agencies to accept electronic filing, application and issuance of permits and licenses without having to amend their individual Acts. Other key aspects of ETA were the legal recognition of electronic signatures and authentication of the identity of the originator of electronic records. These paved the way for transactional type of services to be delivered online.

### Central Technical Infrastructure

In January 2001, the Public Service Infrastructure (PSi) was commissioned as a central infrastructure for the rapid development of e-forms equipped with gateways for electronic payments and authentication. Some 90 e-services are in various stages of development. Some services already implemented include Renewal of Road Tax, Search for Vehicle Insurance Particulars and Renewal of Driver's License.

The availability of credit card and Internet direct debit (i.e. direct deduction from individual's bank account) in September 2001 will accelerate the rollout of e-services that require these convenient payment modes through a common gateway.

Currently, the government is exploring a nation-wide authentication mechanism.

## 3 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT & CHALLENGES

eCitizen portal is undergoing a revamp focusing on easier navigation, better search results and more useful e-services. Business town, in particular is transforming itself into a G2B portal with the intent to be the convenient point of businesses and companies to access e-services in an enterprise-centric manner according to business segments and different stages of the 'business life'. More sub-portals will be introduced and launched in November 2001.

Providing convenience and more value to citizens and businesses are the primary objectives of these portals. **Integrated** e-services have been identified as crucial in providing a one-stop location for the citizens to transact with the government instead of having to make many stops to several agencies. From the citizen's perspective, they want to deal with one government, not the many parts of a single entity. A project that has demonstrated this initiative is the "One Stop Submission Centre" where qualified professionals can submit their building documents and drawings to as many as 13 regulatory agencies for approval from a single point. The first phase of this system will be live in November 2001.

**Personalised** access is central to the portal concept. The citizens should immediately access the information specifically relevant to them rather than having to manually navigate through to find them. Businesses and companies should be able to access integrated information and services across government agencies and

in an enterprise-centric manner. The collective cooperation of agencies are needed to push personalized services from multiple heterogeneous database in a unified manner.

With the public and private sector complementing each other in serving the public in terms of service offerings, there may be an increasing need to look into the possibility of **collaborating with the private sector** in the strive for true citizen centricity. While there is value and potential for better synergy between the two sectors and some agencies have actually collaborated with the private sector in recent portal development projects ([www.miw.com.sg](http://www.miw.com.sg), [www.onemotoring.com.sg](http://www.onemotoring.com.sg)), an in-depth examination of the policies and issues relating to this new business model is primordial before further engagement.

#### 4 PORTAL SAMPLES

[www.ecitizen.gov.sg](http://www.ecitizen.gov.sg) - eCitizen is a one-stop integrated portal for government services designed with the citizens' needs in mind. Whether you are looking for information about the public services, making an enquiry or transacting with the government, you can find all these and more in our portal organised intuitively into various categories and service packages.

- [www.nlb.gov.sg](http://www.nlb.gov.sg) - is the portal for library services and information.
- [www.employmenttown.gov.sg](http://www.employmenttown.gov.sg) - is the gateway to labour market information and services in Singapore. It offers timely and well-informed decisions on employment, training, and human resource practices to meet the changing needs of the workplace.
- [www.familytown.gov.sg](http://www.familytown.gov.sg) - is positioned as a cross-agency e-services portal with regards to family matters.
- All other sub-portals (i.e Housing, Health, Education etc) are directly linked from eCitizen and do not have their own domain names.

[www.gov.sg](http://www.gov.sg) - is the first level portal of the Government of Singapore within which all the other government (ministries and statutory boards) portals are linked.

Note:

<sup>1</sup> Details of eGovernment Action Plan can be obtained from <http://www.ida.gov.sg>

<sup>2</sup> Details of NITLP can be obtained from <http://www.ida.gov.sg>