

ICA Country Report: Singapore e-Government 2005

**Submitted by:
Wu Choy Peng
National Representative, Singapore**

**Infocomm Development Authority of
Singapore**

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About Singapore and Its ICT Environment

Singapore is an island republic with a land area of 699 sq km and a population of 4.24 million, resulting in a high population density of 6,066 per sq km. Singapore's per capita GDP in 2004 was S\$42,581 (US\$25,292). The literacy rate in Singapore stands at 94.6% among residents aged 15 years and above.

Today, Singapore is one of the most connected Asian cities with more than 16 Gbps of extensive and direct Internet connectivity to over 20 countries. 74% of households own personal computers and 65% of households having Internet access.¹ With a nationwide broadband infrastructure, household broadband subscription stands at 46.6%.² Mobile phone penetration rate exceeds 95%, overtaking the fixed line penetration rate of 43.2%. This makes Singapore one of the highest mobile penetration rate in the world, and Singaporeans are among the highest extensive users of Short Message Service (SMS)

Structure of the Singapore Government

Singapore has a parliamentary system of government. A written constitution provides for the organs of state, namely, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary.

President S R Nathan is the Head of State. The Prime Minister and the other Cabinet members are appointed from the Members of Parliament. The Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, is appointed by the President. On the advice of the Prime Minister, the President appoints the other Ministers to form the Cabinet.

¹ IDA's Annual Survey on Infocomm Usage in Household 2004

² Telecom statistics from IDA at www.ida.gov.sg, "Facts and Figures"

The Cabinet is responsible for all government policies and the day-to-day administration of the affairs of state. The Cabinet comprises the Prime Minister and the Ministers for: Community Development, Youth and Sports; Defence; Education; Environment and Water Resources; Finance; Foreign Affairs; Health; Home Affairs; Information, Communications and the Arts; Law; Manpower; National Development; Trade and Industry; and Transport (more information about each of these Ministries can be found online at www.gov.sg).

Singapore e-Government Leadership & Management

Singapore's e-Government programme is widely acknowledged as one of the most advanced in the world (Please see Annex A for awards and accolades). Strong leadership and clear vision has been central to the success of e-Government in Singapore.

The Public Service ICT Committee, comprises Permanent Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries and CEOs of Statutory Boards. The Committee provides strategic directions for government-wide organisational transformation through the use of ICT. Besides spearheading the exploitation of emerging technologies for organisational transformation, the Committee also provides advice on the implementation of e-government initiatives.

The eCitizen Council was formed in January 2004 as a forum for collaboration among eTown Mayors³. The Council decides on the overall direction and policies for the eCitizen portal, which provides a single point of access to all government information and services online. The eCitizen Council, chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, has Permanent Secretaries of eight Ministries

³ Information and services from multiple agencies are grouped into logical clusters called "e-Towns". e-Towns are virtual towns each with its own e-Town Mayor. The eTown Mayor is responsible to spearheading the development of the eTown. He/She is usually the head of the ministry which offers the largest number of services in the cluster.

as members. Each of the Permanent Secretaries is an appointed eTown Mayor, responsible for the development of a particular eTown in the eCitizen Portal. This structure transcends organisational boundaries, and plays a crucial role in actualising the vision of “*Many Agencies, One Government*” - the Singapore Public Service’s ultimate goal as a *Networked Government*.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance also chairs an e-Government Advisory Panel that comprises representatives from both the public and private sectors. Besides advising on global trends in e-government and their impact on Singapore, the Panel also provides feedback to the Government on areas where implementation efforts can be improved.

The Ministry of Finance is the overall owner of the e-government programme in Singapore. As such, it owns the public sector’s ICT policies and most of the centrally run ICT infrastructure and services.

The Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) is the Chief Technology Officer and Chief Information Officer to the Government of Singapore. As the CTO and CIO to the Government, IDA:

- Provides technical advice and recommendations;
- Defines and recommends ICT policies, standards and procedures;
- Performs service-wide ICT master planning;
- Advises on and manages the central ICT infrastructure; and
- Manages central ICT infrastructures and projects.

Permanent Secretaries of Ministries, Heads of Organs of State and Chief Executive Officers of Statutory Boards are responsible for the ICT infrastructure and services specific to their own organisations. Assisted by their CIOs, they:

- Articulate the organisation’s vision in the exploitation of ICT;

- Align ICT policies, standards, projects, systems and infrastructure to those of the central authority, and the organisation's business needs and priorities;
- Provide leadership in the planning and prioritisation of IT initiatives; and
- Ensure appropriate management attention, manpower and monetary resources are given to implement ICT initiatives.

To foster greater collaboration among government agencies, the CIO Forum was formed in May 2004. This platform promotes inter-agency sharing of best practices and systems. It is also an avenue for feedback to the central authorities on service-wide e-government initiatives.

Singapore's e-Government Action Plan II

Singapore sees e-Government as a means to reinvent government. This is encapsulated in Singapore's e-Government vision of being "a leading e-Government to better serve the nation in the digital economy". e-Government addresses the fundamental challenge of serving customers in the most convenient, responsive and effective way possible, with ICT as the key enabler. The two pillars of e-Government are e-governance⁴ and e-service delivery.

Capitalising on the strong foundation that has been established in government computerisation in the past two decades, the S\$1.3 billion (US\$760 million) e-Government Action Plan II (eGAP II) was launched in July 2003. This plan incorporates strategies to transform the Public Service into a Networked Government that delivers accessible, integrated and value-added e-services that

⁴ e-Governance refers to the use of ICT in enhancing the relationship between citizens and Government, particularly in the area of policy development, feedback, policy implementation and policy review.

meet the needs of a changing environment. The aim is to achieve the following three key outcomes by 2006:

Key Outcome 1: Delighted Customers

The aim is to delight customers, whether individuals or businesses, with convenient and easy-to-use e-services. The targets for 2006 are:

- To implement 12 or more cross-agency integrated e-services;
- Have 90% of the Government's customers use e-services at least once a year; and
- Have 80% of these users satisfied with the overall quality of e-services.

Key Outcome 2: Connected Citizens

To support Singapore's nation building efforts, new ICT-enabled channels will be used to reach out to all Singaporeans, whether they are living in Singapore or overseas. For example, they can find out more about public policies online through various government websites, as well as participate in the policy-making and review process through an online public feedback portal.

Key Outcome 3: Networked Government

A *Networked Government* forms the essential foundation upon which the two social outcomes of *Delighted Customers* and *Connected Citizens* are built. There may be numerous government agencies, each having different charters and bearing different responsibilities, but in a Networked Government, these agencies must collaborate, share information and leverage on collective knowledge, to serve the public seamlessly and effectively, in order to achieve the "Many Agencies, One Government" service delivery paradigm.

Operationalising the e-Government Action Plan II

Ultimately, e-Government is not about IT or adding an “e” to the business of government. It is fundamentally about reinventing the way a government operates and its whole approach towards governance. The challenge is to constantly look for ways to better serve the stakeholders, beyond current services offerings; always seeking to delight customers and connect with citizens.

To realise the three key outcomes of the e-Government Action Plan II, specific programmes and projects have been put in place. To delight customers, besides improving public access to Government websites and e-services, efforts have been made to enrich and enhance the users’ experience when transacting online with the Government. In connecting with the citizens, Government agencies have stepped up efforts to explain the rationale behind public policies on their websites and undertake online public consultations during policy formulation. In the area of networked Government, common ICT infrastructure and standards have been developed to achieve greater economies of scale and interoperability. To facilitate knowledge sharing among agencies, initiatives to transform the public sector into a knowledge enterprise are in progress.

Increasing Awareness of e-Services

Today, more than 98% of all public services that can be delivered electronically are available online. In October 2004, Singapore Government Online (www.gov.sg) was launched, unifying 3 portals - SINGOV, eCitizen and business.gov.sg – into 1. Developed with the customer in mind, Singapore Government Online is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide a single access point to Government information and services online.

www.gov.sg is organised into 4 segments based on target audience:

- **Government:** This is where the user can obtain information about ministries, statutory boards and nation-wide events, as well as share their views via a feedback channel.
- **Citizens and Residents:** This is where all government-related information and services on defence and security; housing; transport and travel; culture, recreation and sports; health and environment; family, community and development; as well as education, learning and employment, are located.
- **Businesses:** This segment caters specially to the needs of businesses in Singapore.
- **Non-Residents:** This segment provides non-residents with useful information and services about visiting, living, studying and working in Singapore.

To raise awareness of e-services and encourage the public to transact online with the government, public agencies have undertaken concerted efforts to promote e-services through the mass media, public exhibitions and direct marketing channels.

Judging by the outcome of the 2004 e-Government Perception Survey, which asked citizens and residents questions pertaining to their awareness and usage of government e-services, the promotion efforts have paid off. The following are some noteworthy findings from the survey:

- 88% of those who needed to transact with the Government in the last 12 months did so electronically at least once;
- 81% of those who transacted electronically with the Government gave a rating of at least 4 on a 6-point scale for the overall quality of electronic services.
- 74% of the respondents were aware of at least three government electronic services, including popular e-services such as filing of income tax and requesting for Central Provident Fund statements.

Providing Convenient Access to e-Services

Convenient access to the Internet is a pre-requisite for the public to transact online with the Government. Those without access to a computer or the Internet can go to public libraries and e-clubs at community centres to get online. Government agencies have also set up **self-service terminals** for the public to transact online instead of joining queues at the service counters. More than 1,200 self-service Internet terminals have been installed across 150 public service locations by end March 2005. This is part of the strategy to gradually 'migrate' users from service counters to online channels.

In addition, the IDA and Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) have partnered PC vendors, broadband vendors and training schools to provide the Business CARE programme. Through **Business CARE**, companies can have affordable PC-broadband access and training to use government e-services. The Business CARE Programme represents one of the initiatives to help enterprises in Singapore to overcome the barriers to use e-services.

For the individuals, the **eCitizen Helper Programme** has been put in place to assist those who need help in transacting online with the government. At the 83 eCitizen Helper outlets located at libraries and community centres island-wide, helpers are at hand to either show a member of the public how to use the e-services such as applying/renewing a passport, or if necessary, carry out the online transaction on behalf of the member of public. In 2004, about 40,000 transactions were done with the assistance of the eCitizen Helpers.

To ensure that no one is disadvantaged, the Government is encouraging all agencies to adopt the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) standards for web accessibility, so that all segments of the population, including those with physical disabilities, can access online government information and websites and services.

Improving and Generating Positive e-Service Experience

The Singapore e-Government continuously strives for excellence in serving the people and this includes improving on the user experience when they are transacting online. With all government websites adopting a common set of **Web Interface Standards**, users will experience consistent, intuitive and smooth user interfaces when navigating from one government website to another.

On the business front, the Government understands that starting a business can be a complicated and tedious process. From registering a business as a legal entity to applying for different types of licences/permits to start the business, the applicant is likely to have to visit several different agencies and fill in a multitude of forms, providing the same information repeatedly. The entire process could take a couple of months and result in missed business opportunities.

The **Online Business Licensing Services (OBLS)**, a one-stop business licence application service on www.business.gov.sg, aims to make it easier for a person who wants to register for a business. With OBLS, the user just needs to submit one application for multiple licences. Today, more than 80% of business start-ups in Singapore can go online to apply for all the required licences. OBLS offers 68 licences from 19 government agencies. With OBLS, the Government hopes to create a more pro-enterprise environment in Singapore, where new businesses can be started more affordably and hassle-free. In May 2005, OBLS won the United Nations Public Service Award for the Application of ICT in e-Government.

Instilling Confidence in e-Services

As some e-services need to authenticate the user before proceeding with the transaction, the **Singapore Personal Access (SingPass)** serves as a common password for all Government e-services that need single-factor authentication. All Singapore citizens, permanent residents, employment pass holders and

dependant pass holders who are at least 15 years old are eligible to have a SingPass. The **e-Services Authorisation System (EASY)** allows companies to authorise their staff to use their SingPass to access Government e-services on behalf of the company. The introduction of SingPass is an added dimension of user centricity and convenience, as it alleviates the need for members of the public to remember different passwords for e-services offered by different agencies.

To further instill confidence in e-services, the Government adopted a national code of practice for online services under the **TrustSg Accreditation Scheme**. With this scheme, Government agencies that offer online transactions are required to comply with a stringent code of conduct for online business practice set by the National Trust Council in Singapore (www.trustsg.com.sg). Upon compliance, they are accredited with the TrustSg seal. An example of the code of conduct required of TrustSg accredited agencies is the disclosure of sufficient information about their services to help customers make a well-informed transactional decision. By February 2005, 84% of Government agencies have been accredited.

Engaging Citizens through Active Consultation & Virtual Communities

One of the key thrusts under e-Government Action Plan II is to move up the e-governance maturity framework. This includes wider consultation with citizens in the policy formulation process. Today, public agencies in Singapore have published online the rationale behind more than 85% of their policies, and over 60% of policy consultations are conducted electronically.

With the launch of the **Government Online Consultation Portal** (www.feedback.gov.sg) in April 2003, the public can voice their opinions on national issues and policy proposals online. They can also participate in online debates with fellow citizens on a wide range of issues in the discussion forum. The portal receives about 600,000 hits per month. In the year 2004 alone, over 5,000 public feedback were received, mostly via email.

Transcending Organisational Boundaries

In the last ICA Country Report 2004, Singapore highlighted a few initiatives that contributed towards the vision of a Networked Government by harnessing the resources of the public sector. These initiatives included the:

- **Knowledge Management Experimentation Programme** that contributed to a common understanding of Knowledge Enterprise and define specific knowledge-based initiatives;
- **Public Sector Infrastructure (PSi)** that allows speedy deployment of large-scale, sector-wide e-services;
- **Service-Wide Technical Architecture (SWTA)**, which is a set of principles, standards and guidelines prescribed to ensure interoperability of ICT systems and effective deployment, management and investment protection of the public sector's ICT assets. As of to-date, 83 % of the Government agencies have developed an Agency-wide Technical Architecture to guide them in the design, acquisition, implementation and management of ICT systems;
- **IT Portfolio Management (ITPM)** that provides agencies a set of management tools to systematically evaluate, prioritise, select and manage new and existing ICT projects, and ensures that projects are aligned to the agencies' strategic objectives and achieve a balance between risks and returns; and
- **Singapore Government Metadata Standards (SGMS)** which will enhance users' navigation and search experiences on all Government websites by implementing a service-wide metadata and taxonomy standard.

New initiatives have since been in development, contributing further to the vision of a Networked Government for Singapore. The Government Web Services Exchange (GWS-X) and Knowledge Enterprise Network are two of such initiatives

The **Government Web Services Exchange** (GWS-X) is a central platform that enables the real-time sharing of information and services among government agencies via web services. It also opens up the possibility of similar collaboration with the private sector in a secured environment. The Knowledge Enterprise Network (KEN) on the other hand is an integrated knowledge sharing and management platform. It will provide a suite of web-based document management, collaboration and workflow tools. This initiative will help build the Singapore government into a knowledge enterprise and enhance inter-agency collaboration as a Networked Government.

In addition to these, Singapore has taken a step further to involve the private sector in public service offerings. The **Public-Private-People Integration or 3PI** initiative was announced last October. It recognizes that integration within the Government alone is not good enough. Integration must extend to offering services to the user which are provided by the private sector and the people sector.

Projects adopting the 3PI approach include **My.eCitizen**, a user portal (www.my.ecitizen.gov.sg) that provides personalised eCitizen e-services and alerts. The portal received a huge increase in take-up from 2,200 in June 2003 to 36,000 in June 2005. This increase shows how efforts to enhance the usability of e-services help to increase the adoption rate. My.eCitizen portal can potentially be integrated with relevant consumer-oriented e-services offered by the private sector.

The **National e-Payment Hub** is another 3PI initiative that will provide a one-stop portal for the payment and presentment of government bills and private sector bills through electronic means. Consumers no longer have to go to different websites to pay different types of bills. The new hub will consolidate all billing organisations under a central hub that offers secure and trusted electronic bill payments and related services to consumers. The services of the national electronic bill payment hub will be made available over a two-year period and is expected to roll out in phases in mid-2006.

Another significant 3PI project in the pipeline is the **TradeXchange**. It is an integrated Trade and Logistics IT platform that manages the flow of trade-related information. This platform will enable exchange of information between shippers, freight forwarders, carriers and financial institutions to facilitate the flow of goods within, through and out of Singapore. This integrated platform will automate the creation and exchange of commercial and regulatory documentation necessary for trade. By providing a single web interface for all trade-related IT systems, this integrated platform will help logistics players cut down on multiple data entry steps. This means less duplication of manual efforts and reduction in human errors which will ultimately improve efficiency and time to market. The net effect is increased competitiveness for the logistics industry.

Enhancing ICT Security for Business Continuity and Infrastructure Resiliency

The **Infocomm Security Masterplan** (ISMP) was officially launched in February 2005 by Deputy Prime Minister Dr Tony Tan at the Infocomm Security Seminar. Under the Plan, the Government will inject S\$38 million over three years to implement the projects under the ISMP. One of the projects under the ISMP is the Infocomm Security Awareness Programme and a publicity campaign is on-going to raise awareness of cyber security among Internet users and businesses.

Under the ISMP, plans are underway for the Government to build a **National Cyberthreat Monitoring Centre** (NCCMC). The NCCMC project will provide the capabilities to monitor network traffic and respond to malicious events. The NCCMC will be the nation's capability to maintain a coherent situational awareness of cyber-threat. NCCMC represents a national resource to reliably collect, analyse and disseminate cyberthreat information to the nation, and achieve round-the-clock monitoring and alerting for critical installations within the public and private sectors.

Key projects are also in the pipeline to develop measures on security readiness for the people, private and public sectors. Some of these include the Business Continuity Readiness Assessment Framework and Infocomm Security Health Scorecard.

The ***Business Continuity Readiness Assessment Framework*** aims to establish a common framework to measure the level of readiness of the public sector agencies in resuming business operations should an incident result in the unavailability of their Government operations and services. Once the Business Continuity readiness level of the public sector has been measured and established using the framework, the result can be used to enhance the agencies' Business Continuity plans to ensure a resilient and robust government infrastructure.

Another project in the line-up includes the ***Infocomm Security Health Scorecard***, to establish a scorecard to assess the state of ICT security health of the public sector. With this, it will help to identify gaps and shortfalls in the public sector's ICT security preparedness. The relevant stakeholders will then be able to ensure that the necessary actions are taken to improve these critical areas, thus improving the public sector's overall ICT security health.

There are also other on-going efforts to enhance the infrastructure resiliency of the Public Sector. This includes the setting up of the ***Security Monitoring and Alert Infrastructure*** (SMAI) to monitor, detect and respond to cyber attacks on the central government systems and establishing a ***Resilient Domain Name Service*** (DNS).

Optimizing Value Through Shared Services

In April this year, the Singapore Government announced S\$1.5 bil (approx. US\$0.9 bil) worth of IT tenders to be called for a ***Standard ICT Operating***

Environment (SOE) project. At present, the public sector ICT operating environment consists of diverse desktop and network configurations. A standardised environment across the public sector will reduce the time and costs required to implement new ICT services and minimise incompatibility problems. Once the SOE is fully deployed by 2009, the Government expects to realize at least 30% net savings per year.

Innovating Through Technology Experimentation

Under the **Technology Experimentation Programme**, the Government calls for the industry to recommend new or innovative solutions that can be piloted for possible adoption within a 1- or 2- year timeframe. The solution involved can be the first of its kind to be deployed in the public sector, and offers great potential to benefit the government agencies and/or public. An example of such technology innovation is the **Mobile Mail Solution**. The Mobile Mail Solution is part of the Government's efforts to seek participation from the industry in proposing, testing and deploying innovative solutions within the public sector. Trials have been carried out since 2003 on different mobile mail solutions before the Government decided on Duality, a Finnish product. By September 2005, selected government personnel will be able to read and respond to emails, calendar and contact list that are pushed to their handhelds securely any time, worldwide. This enables faster turnaround time to mission-critical decisions and increase in productivity.

Exporting e-Government Expertise and Capabilities

Singapore's experience in e-Government development through the years has gained world-wide recognition. The Government signed agreements with Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and State of Kuwait in October 2003 and September 2004 respectively to collaborate on e-Government planning. Such co-operations

provide a platform for the sharing of expertise in e-Government operations and the delivery of e-Government services in partnership with Singaporean companies. Bilateral relations are strengthened through the collaborations, and the way for increased trade and investments is paved to spur economic growth for both countries.

Moving forward, the ICT sector remains a key engine of growth for Singapore. In FY2004, the Government spent about S\$1.6 billion on ICT. This worked out to 4.5% of Government expenditure. The Government also continues to encourage the industry to engage public agencies through sharing of technology trends and technology trials.

Conclusion

Governance in the e-world requires clear understanding and insight into the impact of ICT on our citizens and businesses. Our policy decisions must take into account the social and economic impact of technology trends on our stakeholders, and be fine-tuned accordingly.

With this in mind, over the next one year, the Government will be working closely with the private and people sectors, to develop a 10-year ICT master plan for the whole of Singapore, called iN2015 (“in twenty-fifteen”) or Intelligent Nation 2015. We want to build on our strong foundations in ICT to propel Singapore to the next level of ICT development, including e-Government. The vision is to create a Singapore that is conducive for flourishing businesses, a smart workforce and a well-connected society, with the help of ICT. The Government will also be embarking on the next phase of e-Government master-planning to develop the third e-Government Action Plan.

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Annex A: Singapore e-Government - Making Waves Internationally⁵

Aug 2005

Singapore's Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports won the CIO Honoree Award for an Integrated Case Management System.

May 2005

Singapore was awarded the UN Public Service Award in the category of "Application of ICT in Government: e-Government" for the *OASIS project*, of which the Online Business Licensing Service was one of the initiatives.

March 2005

Singapore ranked 8th in the e-Government Readiness index in the United Nations e-Government Readiness Report.

Apr 2005

Singapore ranked 3rd after US and Canada in Annual e-Government Leadership Study of 22 countries by Accenture.

Feb 2005

Singapore ranked 1st in the World Economic Forum Global Information Technology Report.

Oct 2004

- Singapore's Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports won the Dubai International Award for *Childcare Link* under the category for "Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment".
- Singapore's Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS), Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), Accounting & Corporate Regulatory Authority (ACRA), Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) and Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) won Intelligent Enterprise Asia Awards for their respective projects: *Trade Marks System, Crisis Information Management System, BizFile, Case Management System and Matrix System*.

⁵ Visit the Singapore e-Government website (www.egov.gov.sg) for an updated list of awards and accolades.

Sep 2004

Singapore ranked world's 2nd in Government e-services in the Global e-Government Study by Brown University.

May 2004

National Archives of Singapore won the Stockholm Challenge for the *Access to Archives Online* project.

April 2004

Singapore ranked 7th (up from 12th in 2003) among 60 of world's largest economies in e-Readiness Ranking study jointly by EIU & IBM.

October 2003

Singapore's eCitizen Portal Wins Prestigious Stockholm Challenge Award 2003.

February 2003

Singapore Tops e-Government Category in World Economic Forum's Global Information Technology Report for Government Readiness.

July 2002

Singapore Placed 11th out of 60 Countries in the Economist Intelligence Unit 2002 e-Readiness Rankings.

June 2002

Singapore Recognised for Excellence and Innovation in e-Government at e-Gov 2002 Show in Washington DC, USA and Honoured with Explorer Award.

January 2002

Singapore's Public Sector Infrastructure Wins Prestigious Intelligent 20 Award.

October 2000

eCitizen Centre Wins Bronze in Commonwealth Association of Public Administration and Management's International Innovation Award.