e-Governance Policy for the
Royal Government of Bhutan

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Department of Information Technology & Telecom,
Ministry of Information & Communications,
Royal Government of Bhutan.

1. NAME OF POLICY

e-Governance Policy for the Royal Government of Bhutan

2.   RATIONALE/PURPOSE

The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) has prioritized information and communications technology (ICT) developments with the vision of ***"An ICT-enabled, knowledge society as a foundation for Gross National Happiness."*** Further, Information, Communications and Media (ICM) Act of Bhutan 2018 mandates the Ministry of Information & Communications (MoIC) to set strategic directions for implementing and promoting electronic governance (e-Governance) in Bhutan.

The government has initiated numerous ICT initiatives to improve the delivery of public services. However, the use of ICT in government agencies is confined to agencies working in isolation. The lack of proper coordination for the implementation of such ICT initiatives has resulted in duplication of effort and wastage of scarce resources. While e-Waste is not yet a major concern it is a growing concern that must not be forgotten. The revised ICT Roadmap 2015 also highlights the key challenges for ICT as low adoption, lack of adequate budget and human resource capability in implementing e-Governance initiatives.

To overcome these challenges, the government has developed and approved the implementation of e-Government Master Plan in 2014. However, the effective implementation of the masterplan has been a challenge in the absence of an e-Governance policy.

Therefore, the e-Governance policy is expected to provide clear guidance for implementation of e-Governance initiatives in the country. In addition, the policy will enable government to fully leverage existing and emerging ICTs to increase competitiveness, enhance productivity, improve service delivery, and strengthen good governance in pursuit of Gross National Happiness.

2.1.   Objectives:

The main objective of the policy is to provide clear guidance during the implementation of e-Governance initiatives in the country.

The specific objectives are as follows:

1) Ensure all government services are made online, where possible, to transition from a conventional paper based to a more convenient paperless environment;
2) Ensure online government services are accessible *to **all individuals, including people with disabilities**;* efficient; secure; and sustainable;
3) Ensure robust delivery of online public services through a holistic approach to reduce redundancy of ICT initiatives through consolidation and reuse;
4) ***Ensure adoption of ICT Standards and enable the use of emerging technologies;***
5) Ensure confidentiality and privacy of citizens are protected to increase trust in online services.

3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

3.1. **BtCIRT:** Bhutan Computer Incident Response Team (BtCIRT) is a national CIRT formed under Department of Information Technology & Telecom (DITT), Ministry of Information & Communications (MoIC) to serve as a central point of contact for cybersecurity; aimed at identifying, defending, responding and managing cyber threats in the country.

3.2. **Common ICT Assets:** Data, infrastructures, systems and platforms which are generic in nature which can be reused by other agencies.

3.3. **Citizen Centric**: A government approach of keeping their citizenry at the center of development during all phases of service innovations. Citizens are engaged during design, development and the continuous improvement of the service(s) which are generally driven by the principle of what citizens want and operates on the scale that is relevant to them.

1.1. **Data:** Data refers to facts, figures or statistics collected for analysis or future reference.

3.4. **Data duplications:** The redundant collection of the same data (for e.g. customers'/citizens) by multiple stakeholders.

3.5. **Digital by Default**: It is a principle of adopting digital/electronic channels as the primary means to deliver any service.

3.6. **Domain Expert:** Is the person(s) who is the authority of the particular area/topic/process/domain. It is also referred as Subject Matter Expert (SME).

3.7. **External Services:** Service provided to external agencies and citizens. It is also referred to as external functions.

3.8. **Government Agencies:** Government Agencies includes all ministries, dzongkhags, autonomous agencies and constitutional bodies.

3.9. **ICT Assets:** Existing data, infrastructure, systems and platforms owned by an agency or by the government as a whole.

3.10. **Information**: Knowledge obtained from analysis, study or collection of data.

3.11. **Internal Functions:** The primary activities/mandates performed within the specific agency. It is also referred to as back office operations.

3.12. **Redundancy:** Duplicate existence of or investments in ICT assets in government agencies.

3.13. **Single Source of Truth**: The practice of structuring data/information which are stored exactly once in a single source to maintain consistency of data and to prevent inconsistent data through the management of multiple copies.

3.14. **Whole of Government:** It is an approach that integrates the collaborative efforts of the departments and agencies of government to achieve unity of effort towards shared goals.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

All RGoB agencies shall adopt the following principles while implementing e-Governance initiatives to achieve the aforementioned objectives:

4.1. Whole of Government (WOG)

WOG integrates the collaborative efforts of all government agencies to meet aspirations and to address common challenges of e-Governance. It will bring together all government agencies to implement e-Governance initiatives in a coordinated, cost effective and sustainable manner.

4.2. Citizen Centric

Citizen Centric ensures seamless delivery of online services by placing citizens at the core of all e-Governance initiatives. RGoB shall consider citizens' needs and their active participation as its highest priority.

5. POLICY STATEMENTS

The following policy statements are guided by the above guiding principles.

5.1. Digital by default

ICT is becoming more accessible and affordable for citizens and businesses alike. This has resulted in increased adoption of ICT and demand for effective and efficient online public services. To fulfill the ever growing demand of the citizens and businesses, RGoB is required to deliver convenient, efficient and effective services.

Further, to enhance the delivery of services, the conventional "over the counter" systems must be **supplemented** by online services.

Therefore:

5.1.1. **RGoB shall go digital by default while reforming or introducing new government services.**

5.1.2. **Ministries/Agencies shall work towards complying to standards and best practices set by the National Enterprise Architecture and DITT shall explore emerging technologies for use in the government.**

5.2. Shared ICT Assets

The RGoB has invested in numerous ICT initiatives to provide reliable, secure and efficient public services. However, the absence of a clear policy has resulted in multiple investments in redundant systems and infrastructure across the government agencies. This results in excessive ICT assets within government agencies which are often underutilized.

Optimal utilization of ICT assets (systems, infrastructure or data) through sharing and reuse will result in significant savings for the RGoB.

Therefore,

5.2.1. **Relevant RGoB agencies shall ensure reuse and sharing of existing common services, ICT infrastructure and data/information, for all ICT initiatives, including compliance of ICT standards.**

5.2.2. **The relevant committee/s of e-Gov Governance structure or Multisectoral Committee shall endorse all ICT initiatives before allocation of funds to ensure reuse and sharing.**

5.3. Single Source of Truth

Government agencies shall leverage the use of ICT tools to gain efficiency, effectiveness and transparency in the execution of their mandates. Generally, these tools facilitates their internal functions and external services leading to collection and generation of huge amounts of heterogeneous data within the agency. Due to lack of coordination, many agencies collect the same data. Since upkeeping the currency of these data is a challenge, the data differs from one agency to another. This entails various risks, such as misinformed decision making based on statistics and reports of such data, hampering the data integrity of all government ICT tools. The challenge of maintaining and updation for quality data can be easily overcome if the data is used from reliable sources.

Therefore,

5.3.1. **MoIC shall identify and recommend a single agency as the owner for a specific data to the Cabinet for approval. The identified agency shall be**

the only agency responsible for collection, updation, and validation of that data.

    5.3.2. **The identified agency shall ensure the quality of data and share it with other agencies.**

5.4. Information Security and Privacy

RGoB has embarked on digitization of public services in resonance to the increasing demand for online facilities. However, due to associated risks such as identity theft, data theft and disclosure of confidential information, protection of electronic information/data of citizens and government are inevitable.

Therefore,

    5.4.1. **Agencies concerned, and/or any other agencies designated by the concerned agency, shall be responsible for safeguarding the security of data, the privacy of the users, and the confidentiality of information. The agencies concerned shall classify data based on its confidentiality to facilitate secure access of permissible data by other agencies.**

    5.4.2. **Agencies concerned shall be responsible for data management and data destruction, including handing taking/transfer of official correspondence, of senior officials**

    5.4.3. **All non-sensitive data, as determined by the Cabinet, shall be archived by a central data repository authority.**

    5.4.4. **MoIC(BtCIRT) shall coordinate incident handling related to cyber security. MoIC shall also develop guidelines concerning the protection of privacy and confidentiality of data, disseminate information on cyber security threats received from both regional and international bodies. In the event of security threats found by agencies, the concerned agency shall alert and properly report it to the BtCIRT.**

5.5. Need Driven Initiatives

The ICT initiatives in the agencies are often driven by factors such as the availability of budget/donor agencies and also adoption of ICT solutions without proper **need analysis**.

Moreover, any ICT initiatives in the agencies are usually led by the ICT officials rather than the domain experts. Consequently, required ownership and support for effective implementation of the initiative is hampered leading to failure.

Therefore,

5.5.1. **All ICT asset procurement and upgradation in RGoB shall be driven by actual requirements/needs of the agencies and must be led by domain experts.**

5.5.2. **RGoB shall regularly develop national technical capabilities considering the needs of national development plans, market demands and potential of emerging technologies.**

5.6. Sustainability

ICT initiatives often overlook the needs to conduct long term investment analysis and develop meticulous sustainability plans. This attributes to unsatisfactory quality of post implementation support and lack of budget to meet recurring expenditures. As a result of it, investments in ICT initiatives may have poor outcomes and thus, the confidence of both users and owners in ICT adoption may be adversely affected.

Therefore,

5.6.1. **Agencies concerned shall undertake sustainability planning at the inception of any ICT initiatives. The sustainability planning shall include assessment on Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) and sustainability operating models.**

5.6.2. **MoIC shall be responsible for increasing national digital literacy to ensure that citizens benefit from the eGovernance initiatives.**

6. LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

6.1. This policy conforms to the following:

6.1.1. Information Communications and Media (ICM)Act of Bhutan 2018.

6.1.2. Information Management Security Policy, internal to DITT

6.1.3. Public Private Partnership Policy

6.2. And Policies/Issuances (Directives) that complements e-Governance Policy are:

6.2.1. Bhutan ICT Masterplan 2014

6.2.2. Bhutan Medicines Rules & Regulations 2005

6.2.3. Bhutan Telecommunications and Broadband Policy 2014

6.2.4. CSMI Policy 2012

6.2.5. Economic Development Plan -2016

6.2.6. Evidence Act of Bhutan 2005

6.2.7. Finance & Accounting Manual (FAM 2001)

6.2.8. Industrial property act 2001

6.2.9. Licensing Policy 2015

6.2.10. National Health Policy 2010

6.2.11. National Strategic Plan for the Prevention & control of STIs & HIV/AIDS, 2008

6.2.12. Public Private Partnership Policy 2016

6.2.13. Social Media Policy 2016

6.2.14. Tertiary Education Policy 2010

7. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURE/ACTION PLAN

Ministry of Information & Communications (MoIC) is mandated to set strategic directions for implementing the electronic governance (e-Governance) in Bhutan. As e-Governance is a cross cutting initiative involving multi-stakeholders agencies, following **institutional arrangements** shall be **considered** for effective implementation of the e-Governance Policy:

7.1. As the custodian, MoIC Shall:

7.1.1. Institute a **multisectoral committee** comprising of relevant government agencies and experts in the country.

7.1.2. Develop the terms of reference for the multisectoral committee; and

7.1.3. Develop roles and responsibilities for DITT to coordinate the implementation of e-Governance Policy

7.1.4. Lead the overall implementation of the e-Governance Policy

7.1.5. Develop overall guidelines/protocols/frameworks/standard operating procedures and other relevant instruments required for the implementation of the e-Governance Policy

7.1.6. Coordinate periodic meetings of the **multisectoral committee**.

7.2. Cabinet Secretariat shall:

7.2.1. Issue government executive orders pertaining to cross cutting issues to reinforce the policy implementations

7.2.2. Facilitate the relevant Ministry/Agency to implement the ICT initiatives related to public service delivery of thee-Governance Policy

7.3. Agency Concerned shall:

7.3.1. Develop and implement agency specific guidelines/protocols/frameworks/standard operating procedures and other relevant instruments required for the implementation of the e-Governance Policy

7.3.2. Lead the execution of activities as per the action plans of the e-Governance Policy if the agency is identified as the lead agency.

7.3.3. Support the implementation of the action plan activities, if identified as the collaborating agency.

8. MONITORING & EVALUATION

The e-Governance Policy consists of a supporting parallel document with **Implementation/Action plans** to exercise the Policy Principles. Further for monitoring and evaluation,

8.1. MoIC in collaboration with lead agencies and stakeholders shall monitor the Action plans and its indicators of the policy on a periodic basis.

8.2. GNHC shall evaluate the implementation of the policy inline with the policy formulation protocol.

8.3. MoIC shall review the policy when required.