

Mampu: Goodbye eGovt, it's all about Digital Government

UNDOUBTEDLY, citizens have become more demanding in how government should serve them. “They are asking, ‘why should I go into a government department to be served.’ And they certainly don’t have the patience to go from one authority to another. That type of service is from a bygone era,” acknowledges Dr Suhazimah Dzazali, deputy director general (ICT) of the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (Mampu).

And while over the past 15 years it has been about putting information online with documents available for downloading following this and with some services delivered online versus having to come in, the mantra moving forward is about making services available digitally instead of physically.

“Which is why we have also consciously shifted from describing the efforts as eGovernment to Digital Government because digital is more comprehensive and digital means integrated and it has to be easy,” explains Suhazimah.

Another benefit is that it makes the process transparent which then eliminates the need for middle men, especially for business related applications.

This shift to Digital Government is a huge task and there is a lot going on in the background to allow the government to start delivering such integrated services and Mampu stands at the heart of these efforts. As the agency tasked with overseeing the public-sector ICT execution, it is not surprising that Mampu is also overseeing the rollout of Digital Government just as it was for its earlier iteration, eGovernment.

Its work on eGovernment saw Malaysia being regularly ranked as among the top 25 countries in the world in an eGovernment readiness index that was published by Accenture in the mid-2000s.

That’s already become irrelevant today. With citizens experiencing better services delivered digitally from the private sector and start-ups, their expectations are that government should follow suit as technology is not the barrier.

Core services to go online first



Mampu is well aware of that and recognizes that the entire government machinery has to be aligned, for it to deliver the integrated services demanded. To deliver such end to end services means all 24 ministries, 722 agencies, 1,700 licensing bodies, which collectively deliver the 13,500 services that government offers, have to realise the role they play collectively in meeting citizens and business expectations.

“But we will start with the core services first, and each ministry, agency must identify what are their core offerings and then they must be integrated,” says Suhazimah (pic), offering Immigration as an example. In issuing the various permits and visas, its system has to be integrated with Fomema, with the National Registration Department, Customs, Internal Revenue Board and others.

“Syndication is going on now to get everyone aligned and to ensure their back ends are ready when we build the front end. So, their readiness from both a service oriented mindset and technology point is important,” Suhazimah points out.

It’s not just all talk and aspiration by Mampu. Recognising the importance of showing the impact of offering integrated digital services, it has identified 5 licenses involving two ministries and three agencies with pilots rolled out this month where those licenses can be applied for and delivered digitally.

“You can say it’s a proof of concept to demonstrate how the licenses can be delivered digitally. Also, the strategy here is that we won’t be doing any big bang releases (for example it won’t wait for an entire ministry to be ready) but move forward in stages, offer the core services first, solicit user feedback, be they public or businesses and keep improving our offerings.”

While this is going on, Mampu is also identifying which government ministries and agencies are ready, from a technology standpoint, and willing, from a mindset point, to be the early ones to roll out digital services.

Executing ICT Strategic Plan

Where there can be a tendency to assume that bureaucrats pay lip service to the various masterplans that proliferate within the hallways of the Malaysian government, Mampu is dead serious about following its ICT Strategic Plan 2016–2020 with its “Citizen Centric Digital Services” tagline.

The plan spells out five strategic thrusts that act as a guide to all government agencies wanting to adopt digital technologies.

- Integrated digital services
- Data driven government
- Optimise shared services and strengthen cyber security
- Collaborative and dynamic ICT governance
- Professional and capable work force

But how does Mampu ensure alignment? Because all government ICT spend has to come through Mampu to approve the objectives of the project. Mampu does not dictate nor control the budget but having all proposals to come through it allows Mampu to ensure the projects make sense and deliver the stated benefits, especially with the new digital emphasis.

To tighten project execution and delivery, Suhazimah shares that Mampu recently introduced a ICT Project Methodology with a circular informing agencies that they must adhere to this when planning their projects. “Agencies wanting to embark on any project must use the templates which help them ensure project objectives are achieved with on time delivery and within the budget. It is something we practice at Mampu and now are replicating to all the agencies.”

Before the introduction of the ICT Project Methodology, Mampu usually engages in a cycle of hand-on pre-counselling with agencies that submit their ICT plans, mainly to guide them in their project submissions. Needless to say, this is time consuming for both parties.

“Through the introduction of the ICT Project Methodology, we are teaching them to think about having a solid business case first and thinking right away about integration with the related third party systems.”

Suhazimah acknowledges that this was not a popular move initially but was necessary. “ICT project runovers in the past have been mainly down to poor project management and we cannot afford that moving forward.”

The earlier mentioned five strategic thrusts of the ICT Strategic Plan sit within an enabling ecosystem with seven objectives designed to collectively provide the ecosystem required to support and enable the successful implementation of the five thrusts.

One of these is Enterprise Architecture for the public sector, the introduction of which Mampu is excited about and is pushing in a big way, says Suhazimah. “It will be a blueprint to guide us in our architecture development especially for large projects.”

Over the next two years Mampu will be guiding all 24 ministries to build their own architecture. With each ministry having multiple agencies under them, it’s important to have one Enterprise Architecture under each ministry that defines it and its agencies, says Suhazimah. “The end game is a complete repository of all the business process in the public sector,” she says.

The use of architecture and blueprint borrowed from the world of architecture is no coincidence. Just as a city planner sets building codes and plans common services such as roads and water, establishing an Enterprise Architecture means setting up the guidelines to be adhered to when developing software and hardware solutions and services.

And coming back again to the core purpose of the integrated digital services, to meet the needs of users, that training that will be conducted on Enterprise Architecture is not just for IT staff but all levels within the ministries and agencies. “This will help them see and appreciate the new culture we are trying to build, one that is guided by clear business processes that benefit end users.”

It’s a journey that Mampu is taking together with the ministries and agencies under them to deliver their services, the impact of which will be judged by users, who will determine whether their government has moved with the times to meet their expectations of a public service machinery that is keeping with the digital era we are in.