



UNITED NATIONS PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS CEREMONY

**AND AD HOC EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON INNOVATIONS IN
THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES**

**Report of the First Awards Ceremony
23 June 2003
New York, NY**



United Nations

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I. Background of the Public Service Awards

The United Nations organized and hosted the first Public Service Awards ceremony in New York on 23 June 2003. Fourteen award winners from different parts of the world joined leading public administration practitioners and scholars on this historic occasion.

This report traces the origin of the Public Service Awards, the significance of the Awards for innovation and excellence in the delivery of essential public services, and the potential for participation in future award events. It therefore begins by highlighting the background and objectives of this landmark event. It then examines the salient features of the various award categories and it gives prominence to the 2002 Public Service Awards winners, as well as to the achievements that made them uniquely qualified for this special award. Part II of this report is devoted to a summary of the Public Service Awards Ceremony.

The idea to launch the Public Service Awards first emerged during the 15th session of the Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance. After deliberating on measures aimed at promoting excellence and encouraging innovation in public service delivery, the Expert Group recommended that an annual event be organized by UNDESA - through its Division for Public Economics and Public Administration (now Division for Public Administration and Development Management) - to recognize and encourage excellence in public administration. This recommendation was subsequently reflected in the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General (E/2000/66), and endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in its decision 2000/231 of 27 July 2000.

As a result of this decision, information about the Awards (including eligibility criteria, and methods of nomination) was widely disseminated among all Member States of the United Nations, partner agencies, as well as relevant regional and national institutions. Organizations, such as the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, the American Society for Public Administration, and many others were invited to nominate candidates for the various categories of awards. The Global Online Network on Public Administration (UNPAN) proved a useful medium for transmitting information about the awards to the various stakeholders, among them, the United Nations Member States and their Permanent Missions, professional associations, UNPAN on-line regional centers, and other interested bodies. In fact, nominations for the awards may come from:

- Governments
- Government departments/agencies
- Universities/national schools/institutes of public administration
- Non-governmental organizations
- Professional associations

II. Prerequisites for Public Service Awards nominations and award categories

To be considered as a candidate for the Award, nominations must be addressed (via the Internet, or by e-mail or fax) to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Division for Public Administration and Development Management, within the stipulated deadline. Each nomination must be forwarded by a covering letter, accompanied by the duly completed nomination form, a maximum of five letters of reference, and other supporting documents.

At the close of nominations, UNDESA will constitute a pre-selection committee that will screen the nominations submitted, and prepare a shortlist of candidates for the Awards. A Public Service Awards Selection Committee will, in turn, review the shortlist and submit final recommendations to the Secretary-General for approval. The Public Service Awards, which are designed to enhance the role, professionalism, and visibility of the public service, are presented in four categories (the fourth category was added in 2003):

- Improvement of public service results;
- Improvement of the quality of the public service process;
- Innovations in the public service; and
- Application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Local Government: Local e-Government

(1) Award for the Improvement of Public Service Results

To qualify for an award in this category, a nominee must demonstrate the capacity to:

- ❖ Respond constantly to the needs of citizens;
- ❖ Promote equity (by ensuring weak and vulnerable groups access to basic services);
- ❖ Deliver public services in a manner emphasizing timeliness, courtesy, and access.

(2) Award for the Improvement of the Quality of the Public Service Process

The attributes that are likely to enhance the chances of nominees under this category include those indicating evidence that the nominees consistently take measures to:

- ❖ Promote transparency in decision making
- ❖ Promote accountability to citizens, clients, and other stakeholders
- ❖ Promote professionalism (in the areas of human resource/personnel management, public service ethics, management decision making).

(3) Award for Innovations in Public Service

To qualify as “Innovations”, the measures cited in support of nominations must demonstrate clearly that they:

- ❖ Represent a “radical departure” from business as usual;
- ❖ Produce results beneficial to the citizens, the clients, and other stakeholders (as demonstrated in beneficiary surveys/benchmarking studies);
- ❖ Effectively reduce the cost of service delivery while maintaining/enhancing service quality.

(4) Award for Application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Local Government: Local e-Government

Awards under this category target measures that apply ICT solutions to local level problems, and in the process:

- ❖ Enhance service delivery capacity and quality;
- ❖ Re-engineer government operations;
- ❖ Foster e-Participation (i.e., promote interaction between public officials and the public).

III. 2002 Public Service Awards winners

A total of 81 nominations were received. Out of this number, 14 (fourteen) nominees were selected for the awards, with 4 (four) receiving awards in the improvement of public service results category, 4 (four) for the improvement of public service quality, and 6 (six) for public service innovations. While due care was taken to ensure that every region of the world was represented in the final line-up of award winners, the 14 recipients indeed exemplify the best practices in public administration. The dissemination of information regarding the achievements of the 2002 Award winners should be shared with comparable bodies and institutions in different parts of the globe as models of excellence in public administration innovation can be a strong inspiration and motivator for all those who are strenuously working to improve the public sector.

The recipients of the 2002 Public Service Awards are as follows.

Category One: Improvement of Public Service Results

Europe and North America:		
Greece	Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization	<u>Call centre to apply for administrative documents</u>
Asia and the Pacific:		
Singapore	Infocom Development Authority of Singapore	<u>National Trust Council and TrustSg Programme</u>
Western Asia:		
Oman	Muscat Municipality	<u>Cleanliness of Muscat</u>
Latin America:		
Bolivia	Aduana Nacional de Bolivia	<u>Un profundo proceso de reforma</u>

Category Two: Improvement of the Quality of the Public Service Process

Europe and North America:		
Spain	Ayuntamiento de Alcobendas	<u>ITACA Proyecto</u>
Africa:		
Egypt	Ministry of State for Administrative Development	<u>Improvement of administrative machinery</u>
Asia and the Pacific:		

Singapore	Legal Policy Division, Ministry of Law	<i>Polygon of Good Laws</i>
Latin America:		
Mexico	Victoria, Tamaulipas	<i>Family system in Tamaulipas</i>

Category Three: Innovations in the Public Service

Europe and North America:		
Italy	Public Administration Department for Efficiency in the Administrations	<i>Coordination Centre for Innovations in Administrations</i>
Canada	City of Vancouver	<i>Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams</i>
Africa:		
Zambia	Patents and Companies Registration Office	<i>Commercialization</i>
Asia and the Pacific:		
South Korea	Public Procurement Service	<i>Reform of procurement operations</i>
Western Asia:		
Lebanon	Education Center for Research and Development	<i>Research, training and continuous education</i>
Latin America:		
Chile	Servicio de Impuestos Internos (SII)	<i>El sitio web del servicio</i>
For more detailed information on each winner, click on the link on the right or go to http://www.unpan.org		

IV. Summary of the 2002 Awards Ceremony

The first Ceremony of the Public Service Awards, which as mentioned above took place at United Nations Headquarters on Monday 23 June 2003, was inaugurated by Mr. Nitin Desai, United Nations Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and by Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, UNDESA.

At the opening ceremony, Mr Nitin Desai, congratulated the Award winners on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General who also conveyed his apology for not being able to take part personally at the ceremony. Mr Desai noted that the public service day afforded an invaluable opportunity to recognize the virtues of public service. He stressed that effective public administration systems and institutions, in particular, and good governance, in general, have a central role to play in the implementation of the goals outlined in the Millennium Declaration. Meeting the Millennium Development Goals (notably, maintenance of peace and security, poverty eradication, upholding human rights and democratic ethos, making globalization work for

all, protecting the vulnerable and meeting the special needs of Africa) is contingent upon the reform and revitalization of governance and public service institutions.

Mr. Desai thus advocated that sustained attention be given to measures aimed at supporting the efforts of developing countries, as well as economies in transition in building their public service capacities and in strengthening their governance institutions. He contended that to perform its essential role effectively, the public service must be provided with adequate resources.

Turning to the United Nations Public Service Awards, Mr. Desai noted that the programme had a crucial role to play in disseminating best practices in governance and public service management. The programme also had the potential of promoting the visibility and prestige of public service, thereby enhancing the morale of public officials. He paid special tribute to the recipients of the first in the series of Awards. Their successes, he noted, serve as examples worthy of emulation – examples of public service integrity, effectiveness, efficiency, and professionalism. He expressed the hope that the winners would regard the honor bestowed on them as a stimulus for further improvements. He also pointed out that the awards recognized the capacity to reinvent Government and to implement innovative measures therein.

He ended by congratulating all public servants throughout the world on the occasion of the public service day – a day that provides an opportunity to recognize the motivation, commitment and hard work of all public servants.

Following Mr. Desai's speech, all winners were called one by one to receive from him and Mr. Bertucci the United Nations Public Service Award.

V. Main findings of the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Innovations in the Delivery of Public Services

A number of Public Service Awards winners were invited to make a presentation on their achievements and to share with other government officials, experts and United Nations officials their direct experience in promoting excellence in public administration. A summary of their presentations is hereafter reported.

A. Presentation on Patents and Companies Registration Office (PCRO), Zambia

Category: Innovations in the Public Service

Region: Africa

Represented by Mrs. A.M. Banda-Bobo, Acting Registrar, Patents and Companies Registration Office

Synopsis:

This agency, from the African region, won the award in the category of Innovations in the Public Service. The innovation qualifying the Zambian Patents and Companies Registration Office refers to the commercialization of protection of industrial property and registration of enterprises functions. With the commercialization of its operations and under limited financial autonomy, the Office has recorded notable improvements in effectiveness and in service delivery efficiency.

Full Description:

The Patents and Companies Registration Office (PCRO) of Zambia was nominated by the Cabinet Office for its contributions under the Innovations in the Public Service category. The PCRO is an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry of the Government of Zambia. Its mission is to promote innovation, orderly trade and the competitiveness of Zambia Industry and commerce through the provision of information and a registration system for commercial and industrial property rights. The Office manages the country's system for the protection of industrial property and the registration of enterprise under the Companies Act and Registration of Business Names Act. In 1995, the Government instructed the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry to commercialize the department's operations. In line with this directive, the department was given a mandate, first, to raise its own financial resources independently of the central treasury and, secondly, to upgrade the quality of its service delivery.

The greatest achievement was the sustained effort, in the absence of past precedent, to implement the government directive to fully commercialize the department's operations. The PCRO was, among 17 departments, the first set of public agencies selected for the commercialization.

The PCRO has defined three priorities. The first one was building self-financing capacity. The mandate to commercialize the department with a limited autonomy was given by the Government on the condition that once the Department was ceded from the mainstream civil service it no longer expected any funding from the Government. Rather, the Department would be expected to fund its own operations entirely from its own resources and to enter, after three formative fiscal years, into an arrangement with the Central Treasury, wherein the commercialized entity would be required to contribute an certain percentage of its annual income budgeted revenue to the Central Treasury.

The second priority in hiving the department off the civil service was immediate relocation of offices from the Ministerial office block. The need to relocate was also a condition precedent for counterpart input expected of the government in an agreement with the Norwegian Government, through NORAD for the computerization of the office.

The third concern requiring immediate attention was that the consequence of relocation of offices and commencement of commercialization meant a detachment from the principal services of the parent ministry. The Department was faced with the challenge of setting up an Accounts Unit and an Administrative Unit proper to look into matters of management of material and human resources, which prior to this had been the preserve of the parent ministry.

One of the several changes experienced from the achievements is the quality of the service delivery under the Companies Act. The enactment of the current companies Act in 1994 simplified significantly the national system for incorporation of entities. Despite the tremendous increase in the customer volume per day since the privatization of the economy began, there has been comparatively an improved across-the-counter service, which has been quicker than before. It is necessary to indicate that a good measure of this change in service delivery is a faster retrieval of information for use in meeting various information needs of both the Office and its many customers.

The budget lesson learnt in the process of generally upgrading the efficiency and effectiveness of the PCRO through commercialization is that in the new environment, the Office enjoys a fair

degree of autonomy, which greatly gives it a leeway for enhancing the quality of service delivery to its varying clientele.

B. Presentation on National Customs Service of Bolivia (Aduana Nacional de Bolivia)

Category: Improvement of the Public Service Results

Region: Latin America and the Caribbean

Represented by Mr. Bruno Giussani Salinas, Executive President, National Custom House of Bolivia

Synopsis:

The Customs Service of Bolivia has won the award in the category of Improvement of Public Service Results. It undertook comprehensive institutional reforms aimed at increasing the efficiency of customs collections, halting the traffic in contraband goods, and facilitating external trade. The core elements of the reform programme include the review of human resources policy and practices, the application of modern technology, the streamlining of custom tariff, and the adoption of new customer-service initiatives.

Full description:

Early in 1998, an IMF mission was sent to La Paz, Bolivia, to produce a diagnosis of the situation of the institution and outline a plan for its reform. The IMF diagnostic concluded that the Bolivian Custom Administration was corrupt and politically driven, operating under a complex legal structure, outdated in its practices and procedures, overstaffed and with more than 300 people working without being registered, lacking in information systems for monitoring and control of operation of operations of foreign trade, lacking in basic infrastructure and equipment and totally devoid of a client oriented approach.

Since 1999 the Bolivian Custom Administration started an intense process of institutional reform. To that end, it established a five point agenda for change: i) to dismiss all the “ad honorem” personnel and change all political appointments for qualified individuals selected through competitive procedures undertaken by private sectors firms specialized in mass recruiting, ii) to develop new procedures for all customs operations, so as to give importers and exporters judicial security, iii) to introduce state of the art information technology for customs administration and control of operations, iv) to improve the infrastructure and equipment, and v) to establish a client-oriented culture.

To undertake this reform a financial package of \$US 35 million was collected from the international cooperation (World Bank, Interamerican Development Bank, Nordic Fund, Japanese Government and Bolivian Government).

After nearly four years of hard work, the results have been quite positive. Just to give some examples, the 97% of all existing custom’s personnel were hired through competitive processes run by mass recruiting private sector firms, all economic agents can process their import or export declaration over the internet, all the infrastructure of the new Customs Administration has slowly been refurbished and made more accessible to foreign trade operators in an effort to facilitate and make more transparent the interface with customs officials. But undoubtedly, one of the most

important changes undertaken under the reform process has been the introduction of a client oriented service culture.

From this experience it can be learnt that political will is necessary but not sufficient in the meaning that independence, administrative and financial, are crucial, institutional reform need time, financing needs have to be flexible and accommodate itself to the uncertainties that a process of this kind always carries, the support of international cooperation is essential, and finally one needs to identify and cater for the opinions of your main beneficiaries.

C. Presentation on Integral Development of the Family System of the State of Tamaulipas, Mexico

Category: Improvement of the Quality of the Public Service Process

Region: Latin America and the Caribbean

Represented by Lic. Maria Antonieta Morales de Yarrington, the first lady of the State of Tamaulipas

Synopsis:

The State of Tamaulipas, Mexico, is another winner from the Latin America and the Caribbean region. It won the award in the category of Improvement of the Quality of the Public Service process. The Integral Development of the Family System in Tamaulipas (DIF) is a government institution that offers social assistance, and provides support to vulnerable sections of society. Its actions are targeted at families, especially children and the disabled. For the past three years, the DIF Tamaulipas has undergone a radical change in the coverage of its programmes and the scope of its benefits. DIF Tamaulipas has demonstrated that it could radically transform public institutions into entities capable of providing quality service at levels comparable to those attained by their private sector counterparts.

Full Description:

The Integral Development of the Family System in Tamaulipas (DIF) is the governmental institution to offer social assistance and generate opportunities for the vulnerable population. Its actions are targeted at families, especially to children and the disabled.

Its social policy making is aimed at promoting the generation of a new intergenerational culture. It devoted particular attention to specific demands from the different generational population groups. Providing social coverage to most sectors of society is considered as a main target and its aim is to reduce inequalities. The DIF Tamaulipas helps around 300 thousand people per year. Its infrastructure allows covering all the State through 43 offices that are spread in every borough of Tamaulipas.

For the past three years, the DIF Tamaulipas has undergone a radical change in the coverage of its programs and the increase in its benefits. This has been possible due to institutional efficacy guided to quality roles. In august 2001, DIF Tamaulipas was the first institution to be certified in ISO 9001 system in Mexico under version 2000. The certificate includes 6 central processes, 6 sub-processes in the nutritional programs area to the juridical area, the rehabilitation center and a special education and management process.

The initiative of the General Directorate has resulted in the efficient use of the public resources and increased benefits. The quality has been maintained, a new information system has been introduced and institutional reengineering has taken place. The initiative has resulted in the following changes:

- 1). Reduction in costs,
- 2). Transparency in the administration of resources and services,
- 3). Creation of a client-oriented culture (in substitution for the bureaucratic culture) and
- 4). Extension in the coverage of social programs.

DIF Tamaulipas has demonstrated to society that it can radically transform the official institutions and reach the same standards of quality that private sector organizations have. This experience exemplifies once again that public sector human resources is the central element to achieve effectiveness and sustainability of projects. It has showed that it is important to have the changes and institutional achievement certified by external organizations, which adds to their credibility. All the above-mentioned points out that public institutions are able to achieve effectiveness and the appropriate use of resources.

D. Presentation on Cleanliness of Muscat Municipality, Oman

Category: Improvement of Public Service Results

Region: Western Asia

Represented by Abbas Bin Ahmed, Head of Municipal administration

Synopsis:

Representing the Western Asia region, the Municipality of Muscat, Oman, has won the award in the category of Improvement of Public Service Results. Specifically, it has adopted measures to ensure a high standard of cleanliness within the municipality – including boosting efficiency of its internal operations, staging campaigns to promote awareness in public and individual health, enlisting the support of schools in environmental cleanliness, keeping roads clean, and giving attention to timely collection and disposal of garbage.

Full Description

Muscat Municipality, along with other government units, started in the early seventies to implement plans that aim at developing and modernizing the city, extending the roads and bridges, expanding the network of lighting and green spaces and constructing public parks and utilities and decorative monuments. The municipality's responsibility did not stop at just implementing these projects and equipping itself with the latest technology; on the contrary, it continues to maintain the highest level of cleanliness and provide whatever is required to maintain and preserve these important utilities. Thus, Muscat became a model and example of beauty and cleanliness dazzling the residents and visitors alike.

Specifically, it has adopted measures to ensure a high standard of cleanliness within the municipality – including boosting efficiency of its internal operations, staging campaigns to promote awareness in public and individual health, enlisting the support of schools in environmental cleanliness, keeping roads clean, and giving attention to timely collection and disposal of garbage.

The subject of cleanliness is the top priority facing those responsible for the cities. This subject takes a special place in view of the cities' expansion thus attracting the people to live and work therein, forming a phenomenon of our modern time, and transforming the cleaning services into a difficult challenge. The concentration of large numbers of people in a demographically restricted area, and in one place in the midst of daily consumption habits, results in waste that requires the service of a fully army of cleaners. The difficulties lie not only in the collection of garbage, considering the population's habits in the cities and the waste generated, cleaning services are facing big problems and challenges in disposing of the waste in a proper manner, in order to reduce its environmental and health problems to a manageable level and avoid its hazards. For this reason, Muscat Municipality concentrated its efforts on this aspect. Therefore, cleanliness became an apparent and deeply rooted feature of the city of Muscat, enabling the Municipality to win many Arab and international awards and gaining high reputation among modern cities.

For more information, please go to: www.mm.gov.om

E. Presentation on City of Vancouver, Canada

Category: Innovations in the Public Service

Region: Europe and North America
Represented by Judy Rogers, City Manager

Synopsis:

The City of Vancouver, in the Europe and North America region, won the award in the category of Innovations in the Public Service. It established 16 Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams (NISTs), which helped Vancouver residents solve wide-ranging problems in their communities. The programme was developed in 1994 and implemented in 1995. NIST is based on two premises, i.e., (1) local problems have local solutions; and (2) cooperation and information sharing are critical to the effective solution.

The NIST programme is a unique and effective model of service delivery for Vancouver. Not only has it resolved dozens of difficult problems for Vancouver residents in the several years it has existed, NIST has also succeeded in breaking down barriers between City departments, fostered better communication and cooperation, and empowered citizens who have taken part in the process.

Full description:

Vancouver is the third largest city in Canada, and serves as the gateway to the Pacific Rim. With a budget of \$636 million, the City's 8,000 employees provide hundreds of services to an increasingly diverse community of more than 550,000 residents. Among these are policing, fire protection, library, parks and recreation, street maintenance, garbage collection and recycling, permits and licensing, and animal control services.

According to the City's representative at the 2003 Awards ceremony and resource person at the Expert Panel on Public Service Innovation, the Neighbourhood Integrated Service Team (NIST) programme is a City of Vancouver initiative that helps residents resolve difficult issues in their

communities. These might be issues relating to buildings, garbage, noise, illegal activity, health or safety.

The programme was developed in 1994 and implemented in 1995. It is based on two simple premises:

- Local problems should have local solutions;
- Cooperation and information sharing are essential to an effective solution.

More than 200 City staff sit on 16 teams, each of which represents a particular area of Vancouver. These teams comprise staff drawn from various departments such as the Police, Fire, Engineering, Planning, Permits and Licences, community centers, libraries, as well as outside agencies such as health and social services. These City officials work together, sharing information and coordinating their efforts to solve problems in a holistic and multi-disciplinary manner. The teams meet regularly in (and with) their communities.

The NIST programme is a unique and effective model of service delivery for Vancouver. Not only has it resolved dozens of difficult problems for Vancouver residents in the eight years it has existed, NIST has also succeeded in breaking down barriers between/among City departments, fostered improved inter-departmental communication and cooperation, and empowered citizens who have participated in the process.

The NIST programme mission statement is “*to lead, to provide and to facilitate integrated community-based service delivery*”. In a nutshell, NIST takes city government to the streets.

F. Presentation on Public Procurement Service (PPS), Republic of Korea

Category: Innovations in the Public Service

Region: Asia and Pacific

Represented by Kim-Kyung Sup, Administrator of the Public Procurement Service

Synopsis:

The Public Procurement Service of the Republic of Korea won the award in the category of Innovations in the Public Service. PPS has completed the basis for e-procurement by converting procurement operations into e-commerce base. It transformed itself from an “administration-centred” (that is “rules-bound”) agency into a customer-oriented agency. It eliminated corruption and irregularities at source by posting procurement-related information on the Internet, thus opening the information to the public and cutting cost by 3.2 trillion won (US\$2.9 billion) every year.

Full description:

Public Procurement Service (PPS) provides around 30,000 Korean public institutions with goods and services needed to carry out their responsibilities and give better services to the people. Such procurement administration, however, formerly had cumbersome procedures such as an enormous amount of required documents and frequent visits to the PPS. PPS has gone through the procurement administration reform in general to reduce inconvenience and inefficiency and eliminate irregularities.

First, PPS has completed the basis for e-Procurement by converting procurement operations into e-commerce base. Second, PPS reorganized its service from and administration-centred to one which is customer-oriented. Third, PPS rooted out sources of irregularities and corruption by opening procurement related information to the public through the Internet on a real time basis and participation of external experts such as NGOs in the procurement process. In addition, PPS has made it possible to cut costs by 3.2 trillion won (US\$2.9 billion) every year through a government wide e-procurement system (G2B), which provides other institutes with e-procurement tools.

In order to complete the reform process, PPS created a thorough reform program and pushed forward a systematic reform in two stages. In the first stage from July 1999 to August 2000 to August 2002, its organization and culture were overhauled. PPS clearly set the orientation and the objectives of reform and drove them forward. By establishing PPS's vision and mission and letting the staffs know the goal of the reform drive, PPS encouraged them to participate.

Customer satisfaction for the procurement service keeps increasing. Also, the online bidding system made a great contribution to enhancing the transparency of the procurement administration. It has led to the outside views on PPS changing for the better.

The e-procurement system of PPS can be utilized in other public institutions in Korea and other procurement agencies of foreign countries by modifying it. As of now, the online bidding system is being used by as many as 1,400 public organizations. In addition, G2B system of PPS is an ideal procurement system that has integrated bid notices of public institutions and removed such procedures as redundant registration of document submission by connecting itself with other information systems within the government.

G. Presentation on Ayuntamiento de Alcobendas (Municipal Government of Alcobendas), Spain

Category: Improvement of the Quality of the Public Service Process

Region: Europe and North America

Represented by Mr. Antonio Diaz Mendez, Director of Planning Coordination and Quality,
Municipality of Alcobendas

Synopsis:

The Municipal Government of Alcobendas in Spain has won the award in the category of Improvement of the Quality of the Public Service Process. An ambitious project entitled ITACA (Information, Transaction, and Attention of Ayuntamiento de Alcobendas) has been launched to facilitate and improve the relationship between citizens and the municipal government. The project is essentially a customer-oriented approach to local service delivery – an approach that is not only pro-active, but rests on the application of information technologies.

Full description:

The Municipal Government of Alcobendas has launched an ambitious project called ITACA (Information, Transaction, and Attention of Ayuntamiento de Alcobendas), which undoubtedly reminds us of the permanent odyssey of the reform and modernization of the Administration, the disquieting journey towards quality, and the adventure towards the impossible which any bureaucracy has to undergo in order to engage in constructive change. The project brings about an integral concept of customer-oriented services. The main objectives of this project are to facilitate and improve the relation between citizens and the Administration (in person, by telephone or on the internet) focusing on local people's needs. This project covers topics as income, industry, local census, social and cultural services and urban development.

The ITACA project tries to operate by meeting the expectations of the most dynamic sectors of the local community, i.e., those who utilize information technology. The studies and surveys, which have been carried out by the Research Department, display the data corroborating that (without taking into account the population of school age, 34% of the population of the Municipality have a habitual access to Internet, which is twice as high as the number for Spain – 18.4%). A typical ITACA project has been made possible at its first stage due to the agreements established by the Municipal Government of Alcobendas with financial institutions and private companies on the basis of previous agreements and collaboration in other areas.

The different lines of activities undertaken are joined in the ITACA project going beyond the concept of TELEMATIC management, which deals directly with the relations with the citizen. The information technologies are integrated in a proactive approach in the framework of this project. The Municipal Government has been a promoter of an information platform, action and direct communication with citizens, which in its first stage is united in three basic services: the Card of Alcobendas, Interactive Web of information and action and Integrated Service of attention to the citizen. The card of Alcobendas, citizens is not only a gradual substitution for the different local ID cards, but also serves to draw all services from the institutions in the information and administration level.

An organizational remodeling has been required to introduce this level of innovation, including job reclassifications, continuous improvement and simplification of procedures, new furniture and decentralization of offices, and implementation of more effective technology, amongst others.

One of the main findings of this project is that the local council is more accessible through decentralized offices, self-service desks, telephone service, universal Internet access, and extended opening hours. This has improved considerably the agility of the services with an average waiting list time of 4 minutes.

H. Presentation by Fernando Morena Peña, Constitutional Governor of the State of Colima, Mexico

Mr. Peña, who received on behalf of the state of Colima (Mexico) recognition for the promotion of e-government in Colima, noted that most of the winners of the 2002 Public Service Awards represent successful cases of improvements in public administration at the local level. He argued that this is a clear sign of the crucial role local governments can play in providing services and responding to citizens' needs in a more effective way than international or national levels.

He underscored that the use of information technologies is one way to improve the services offered by the public sector. As a consequence, all efforts aimed at reforming the government require a simultaneous application of re-engineered processes, Internet security, correct application and adequacy of legislation and standardization of information. A re-engineered process is very important in order to allow us to carry out an analysis of the procedures that Governmental offices follow to identify and solve citizens' problems.

Security in the fulfillment of performances is related to the use of information technologies applied to improving service delivery. Some processes have become electronic, so the traditional windows are not useful any longer. To guarantee the security of processes, special measures are required, including electronic signature.

According to Mr. Peña, the correct application and adequacy of legislation is essential to provide legal support to electronic processes. As legislation dated from the beginning of last century did not incorporate these new forms of e-relationships, the State of Colima paid special attention to how electronic documents are to be treated in order to guarantee their validity. The standardization of information is related to the need to standardize registries in order to have quick access and exchange of information for users.

Undoubtedly the social and economic development of a country depends on the quality of government services. Thus, the State not only must eliminate the unnecessary obstacles to innovation and creativeness, but also promote and create new and effective tools.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

A number of issues and guidelines for innovation in public administration emerged during the Ad Hoc Expert Meeting. In particular, there was a consensus that in order for innovation to be successful, the following factors are necessary:

- Political will;
- Time- Institutional reforms need time to take effect;
- Flexibility of financial resources;
- Stakeholders' support;
- Investment in ICT;
- Support of all sectors of society.

There was also a general consensus that in order to consolidate democracy, public services need to be efficient and accessible to all.

Mr. Bertucci concluded the Ceremony by exhorting countries to participate in the next event. He underscored the need to disseminate information among public agencies and all citizens around the world. He concluded by stating: "Let the message go forth that the public service, far from being a tired and spent force, is full of life".