Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation

The "GovPoP" Turns 1 – A Milestone for Policy Practitioners in the T&T Civil Service

On 10th September, 2019, the Community of Practice for Policy Development and Management branded as the GoRTT (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago) Policy Practitioners and more fondly referred to as "GovPoP" by its members, was launched. It is an initiative spearheaded by the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation in alignment with the Government's National Development Strategy, Vision 2030, which identified a need for greater evidence-based decision making in the Public Sector.

In keeping with its theme of enabling **Open, Unified and Transformative** government through policy development and management, the then MPA, hosted the launch event at the NALIS AV Room, Abercromby Street, Port of Spain with a live stream option available to other Ministry officials – taking advantage of existing GoRTT capabilities. Among some of the attendees were Senator the Honourable Allyson West (Minister of Public Administration and Digital Transformation), Mr. David Akopyan (former Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme – Trinidad and Tobago), Deputy Permanent Secretaries representing the community's Steering Committee and other invited guests.

Little did the planning committee know, that it would set the tone for what is now considered the 'new normal'. The world is now in a mode of blended and completely virtual meetings/events due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Even at that time, the Ministry of Public Administration was able to facilitate such an event in accordance with its

vision to be the regional leader in ICT Development and Modernisation of the public service.

One year later, the community has kept their momentum having held 10 meetings (now completely virtual), with an average of twenty (20) community member representatives attending from an average of (15) Ministries across the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT) at each meeting. The community, with a total membership of sixty-eight (68) as at 10th September, 2020, was initiated to enable an enhancement in policy practices by government officials.

The work is two-pronged, the first is to strengthen and deepen policy practitioners' knowledge and the second is to advance the resources available to and used by GoRTT policy practitioners. This will in turn lead to clear and cohesive GoRTT policies, data driven decision/policy making and more active and wider participation in policy development and management. According to the Minister of Public Administration and Digital Transformation, Senator the Honourable Allyson West, "the Community of Practice is a key strategy for the Ministry as it builds capacity in the public service. It engenders connection and collaboration to make positive impacts. To the persons who are impacted by public policy, these documents are not just documents. These documents make provisions for resources available to citizens; these documents outline acceptable frameworks; these documents also set priorities and programmes for funding. These policies therefore impact our daily lives."

Some significant strides the GovPoP has made includes: providing a policy library via data.gov.tt; baseline research into the policy function across GoRTT; the creation of Policy Development Guidelines which are in motion to be Cabinet-approved for use

across the GoRTT; and the hosting of knowledge sessions. These steps reinforce the government's commitment to delivering a more open and digital government.

The GovPoP community is steadfast in achieving more efficient and effective policy development and management across the GoRTT. The ultimate goal is to ensure more effective use of public resources in solving and meeting the needs of the citizenry and other key stakeholders.

We join the GovPoP in recognizing its 1-year milestone and wish them continued future success. In 2021, the community is expected to expand its reach to include membership from more Departments and there are plans to include civil society for citizen participation. There will also be a focus on boosting learning opportunities for GoRTT policy practitioners.

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