

**THE FIRST PUBLIC SERVICE INFORMATION DAY  
Belize Public Service**

**Princess Hotel, Kings Room  
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**Presentation by: Mrs. Myrtle Palacio**

Acknowledgements and Big Up to All Public Officers!!!!

We are within a few days of World Aids Day and it is still timely that the Office of Governance should signal that in keeping with the National HIV/Aids Policy and the Work Place Policy, the Belize Public Service some three months ago finalized its HIV/AIDS Policy. In commencing the implementation processes a call for the nomination of Point of Contacts has been circulated to all Ministries/Departments, and together we will meet to plan a strategy framework based on the Policy. This policy establishes a set of guidelines to protect the health and welfare of Public Officers in the face of the challenge presented by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It is also based on the recognition that recruitment, preservation and motivation of high quality employees are an essential component of an effective Public Service, and one specific objective is to develop concrete responses within the Public Service to deal with issues of HIV/AIDS prevention, stigma and discrimination, the productivity of public officers, and the support of Officers infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

**A year and a half ago, I invited you to embark on a journey of change, of modernization, to improve performance standards and service delivery through transforming people and systems.**

Since then, the Office of Governance has:

- with the assistance of partners, both local and international sponsored a capacity building project targeting middle and senior level Public Service; 28 Public Officers attend short term management and ICT training abroad
- launched a website portal to ensure the availability of information to the public
- implemented the Merit Award Policy & awarded excellence in performance and initiative
- celebrated Public Service Day, publicly recognize the service of long serving Officers who have toiled for 25 years or more

- conducted workshops across the country to bring awareness to good governance principles and the Public Service Regulations
- adopted a strategic direction developed by Public Officers for the Public Service, emphasizing a customer focused and professional public service
- developed an e-government policy and guidelines for the use of the website portal
- completed a ICT Benchmark Report benchmarking Belize with seven other countries
- Conducted and completed an e-readiness survey and disseminated the findings to all partners

**So, the Journey continues. . . . .**

Today's activities mark another first in the many endeavours at modernizing the public service—changing the way we work. Some 26 senior Public Officers will be awarded certificates in three areas of Organizational Change Management. The knowledge of change management enables one to implement the change process, handle obstacles to change and manage change through encouraging creativity and responsiveness. We are also recognizing the efforts of three public officers who will be awarded certificates of appreciation for their leadership roles in planning public service activities. Several public officers have been responsive to the call for organizing events. These three persons stand out as persons who have responded to the call every time, no matter the event, no matter the adversities. We are also witnessing the efforts of four departments in the launch and implementation of Customer Charters. They have taken the bold step not only to set and maintain standards, but also to be more customer focused. Last but not least we as Public Officers are celebrating another effort at bringing government information to the citizens—the first Public Service Information Day. The Government of Belize comprises many agencies and as we focus on our customers, the many agencies must be seen as one government. Over thirty government & statutory boards representing one government, the Union representing the workers are here today, all under one roof—very much a one-stop government event.

In furthering its goal to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service management, public sector modernization and good governance initiatives, the Government of Belize established the Office of Governance in October 2005. The Office of Governance is an amalgam of two government agencies, namely, the Governance Unit

from the Ministry of National Development, and the Public Sector Reform and Human Resource Management and Development from the now defunct Ministry of the Public Service. In addition a new business of government, that of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Electronic Government (E-government), was later included under the purview of the Office of Governance. Since December 2006, oversight to the Elections and Boundaries Department for administrative and financial management was added to the responsibilities of the Office of Governance.

The Office itself is a reform/modernization endeavour. Whereby, once the functions for governance initiatives, modernization and public sector management were under separate managements and institutions of government; this new structure, the Office of Governance embraces all three abovementioned businesses of government under one management. According to Charles Polidano, Institute of Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester, in his publication “Why Civil Service Reform Fail”, that failure is not so much due to the content (what initiatives) of reform, as with the approach (how). One advantage in this new governance framework is the ease of offering more direction to drive governance and modernization initiatives forward.

Good governance provides the enabling, efficient, orderly and transparent environment for development. In public management it is viewed as an “aspect of the new paradigm on public administration, which emphasizes the role of public managers in providing high quality services that citizen’s value and demand. The Public Service plays a vital role, in providing quality public services to all Belizeans--service delivery that is relevant, affordable and effective. As such, the services must be delivered by Public Officers who are responsive, efficient and professional.

Hence the importance of investing in the human capital, as one of the most critical paths to maintaining good governance practices. Human capital development is an on-going process of employing various strategies in people development. The Office of Governance as the leading catalyst for change and as the agency responsible for capacity building continues to focus on activities aimed at upgrading soft skills and addressing competency gaps. Along with continuously investing in people, is the promotion of

governance awareness and information dissemination. The past two weeks saw facilitators from CARICAD engaging senior Officers in the areas of Effective Management and Managing Performance. Tomorrow through to Friday, Deryck Brown and Neville Linton from the Governance and Institutional Development Division, Commonwealth Secretariat will be leading the discussion on the topic “Accountability & Transparency: Preventing Corruption”.

People---Human Capital, is the next competitive advantage, **we---people**, are crucial to organizational success. To survive and thrive we must maximize talent and capability—and skills training must be continuous. While the OOG will ensure the expertise to facilitate such, the learners **and** their managers, such as CEOs, HODs, **must exhibit, show, express** accountability through the demonstration of the newly acquired competencies and aptitudes in their various organizations. **Whew!! Change . . .**

I recognize partners, UNICEF/UNDP, CARICAD, the Amb. of the Republic of China (Taiwan) for their assistance to the cause. I applaud **all** Public Officers for their commitment and effort in effecting change. I acknowledge and thank my staff, the Office of Governance a small but dynamic group, for their commitment to excellence and in understanding the need for change. Lastly, mucho appreciation to the Minister for the Public Service, the Rt. Hon. Said Musa, Prime Minister of Belize for continuing to provide the enabling environment to improve service delivery.

*One Love!! Seremei, Thank you, Gracias, Tenk Unu!!*

***Myrtle Palacio***  
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