Developing Professional Networks

CIPFA 1st International Conference – Trust and Accountability in Public Financial Management

March 15-17, 2011, Queen Elizabeth 11 Conference Centre Westminster London

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Overview

1. Provide an overview of the Commonwealth Secretariat's public sector development strategy;

2. Outline how professional networks fit into that strategy and how they have evolved; sharing the Commonwealth Secretariat's model; and

3. Provide a status on their stages of development, lessons learnt and next steps.

The Commonwealth

Who are we?

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The Commonwealth

A voluntary association of **54 countries** that support each other and work together towards shared goals in democracy and development.

The Commonwealth Secretariat carries out programmes of work based on mandates set by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their biennial summit (CHOGM) and the responsibility for delivering these programmes rests with specific divisions and units.

www.thecommonwealth.org

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Commonwealth Secretariat – Governance and Institutional Development Division

1. The Governance and Institutional Development Division (GIDD) contributes to the Commonwealth Secretariat's commitment to promote democracy and good governance by supporting public sector development in Commonwealth countries.

2. Its work covers the full spectrum of public sector administration and management as well as issues relating to civil society and private sector institutions with public responsibility.

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Public Sector Development

To advance good governance by assisting governments build public service capacity, strengthen public institutions and improve service delivery

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Public Sector Development

How do Professional Networks tie into the Commonwealth Secretariat's Public Sector Development Strategy?

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Principles:

1. There are synergies between governance and development.
2. A strong and effective public sector is a necessary pillar to any public sector reform aimed at ensuring governments offer quality services that meet the needs of its citizenry.
3. A competent and skilled public sector is capable of addressing emerging challenges and opportunities; and is more responsive/proactive to the call for better service delivery.
4. Practitioners are in a more suitable position to identify workable solutions.

These principles have informed the Secretariat's establishment of "communities of practice."

Community of Practice

Primary Aim:

- The coming together of a group of practitioners to share and critically interrogate their practice in an ongoing, reflective, inclusive, learning oriented, collaborative, growth promoting way.

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Community of Practice

General Characteristics:

1. Shared vision that focuses on learning new developments in their profession;

2. Reflective professional inquiry to deepen their knowledge and competences;

3. Collaboration and teamwork; and

4. Collective and individual learning.

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Community of Practice

Benefits of the Community of Practice Approach:

- Participants improve by analysing, evaluating and experimenting with their practice and peers;
- A desire to interact within the network forms the basis for sustainable relationships; and
- The practitioners' engagement informs the Secretariat as to where gaps exists; where leading practices occur; and informs as to where priorities should be placed.

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Community of Practice

What is their impact?

1. As a convergent group of practitioners, they remove structures imposed by each other; create and disseminate information; add value to each others' processes while still achieving their own needs.

2. Introduce changes in public financial management processes and practices in their environment.

Examples - Communities of Practice

- Building Pyramids in the Valley – Thematic Fellowship
- Commonwealth Public Procurement Network

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Building Pyramids in the Valley Project

Aims to intensify the sharing of knowledge and country experiences and the transfer of skills within the Commonwealth in public finance competences and practices. This is achieved through a sustainable engagement strategy involving a *"community of senior public sector practitioners".*

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Thematic Fellowship

- No formal structure;
- Delegates are normally senior level government practitioners within a public financial management function;
- Participants are selected to participate in an exchange learning programme, usually one to two weeks; and
- They are exposed to both theoretical training as well as hands-on experience and are required to share their experiences.

Approach

- Delegates called “Thematic Fellows” identify country specific and regional priorities as part of the process, which the Commonwealth Secretariat supports by providing:
  - Short term technical assistance;
  - Exchange programmes;
  - Peer and experiential learning;
  - Mentoring and coaching opportunities.

Susan, Trinidad and Tobago

Thomas, Ghana

Rebecca, Botswana

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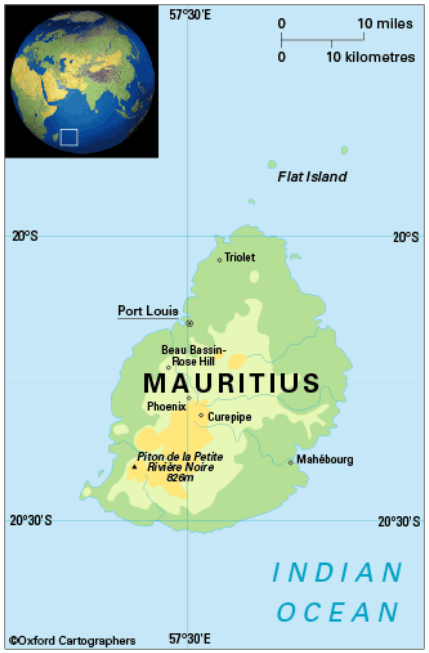
Examples of Initiatives Undertaken by Thematic Fellows

Mauritius

- Introduced risk management in the Revenue Authority. The Authority is now embarking on Phase 2 of the Risk Management Programme with support from the Commonwealth Secretariat.



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Examples of Initiatives Undertaken by Thematic Fellows

Caribbean

- Study conducted on the status of internal audit in the region;
- Host workshops to brainstorm approaches to improve internal audit regionally;
- Garner the support of Permanent Secretaries, professional bodies and development partners to develop a regional intervention strategy.

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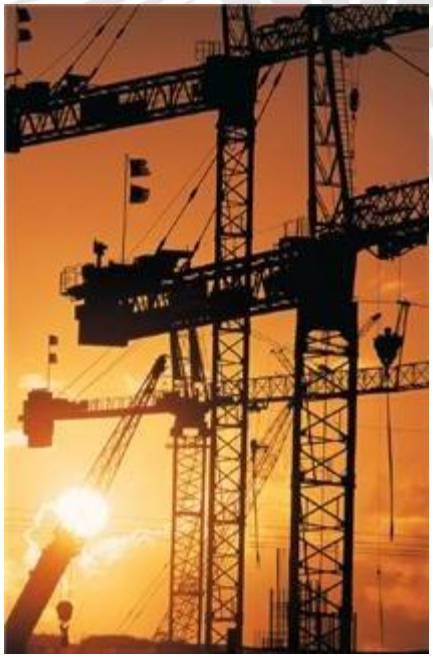
Commonwealth Public Procurement Network (CPPN)

A forum of heads and senior procurement officers drawn from procurement policy and regulatory agencies in Africa.

Now extending to other regions including the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Annual Technical Conferences are hosted by member countries.

An informal structure with appointments of regional coordinators. Chairmanship's tenure is for one year held by the head of the procurement authority hosting the Technical Conference.



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Commonwealth Public Procurement Network (CPPN)

A forum of heads and senior procurement officers drawn from procurement regulatory agencies in Africa.

Procurement reforms are driven by independent regulatory agencies in Commonwealth member countries. Their participation and the outcomes of the annual technical conferences inform the Secretariat's work in public financial management.

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Example of Initiatives Undertaken

- Placement of an expert in Botswana to provide technical advice on the country's government wide approach to e-procurement.

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Lessons Learnt

- Enhances member-centred approaches;
  - Advisory Missions
  - Research and Publications
- Enhances internal capacity;
- Phasing out lower priority programming;
- Endorsement by Commonwealth countries that we are a ‘trusted partner’; and
- Need for more structure to the communities of practice as they have grown in recognition and expectations.

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Next Steps

- Research and Publications – to promote and evaluate the outcomes of initiatives born from these networks;
- Continued support of in-country, regional and pan-Commonwealth initiatives emanating from these communities;
- Increased consultations with member countries and greater collaboration with Commonwealth organisations and development partners; and
- Redesigning the network structure and practices to meet the emerging needs of members.

Thank You!

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