

Observatory on Strategies and Mechanisms for Effective Public Management

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas

July 31st, 2014

This Observatory has been reviewed by the Ministry of Finance of
The Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas



General Information

General Information

By Country: Indicators of Public Management

1. The Commonwealth

[General Information](#): Presents key facts about the Bahamas (Geography, society, economy, politics, amongst other)

2. The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)

[General Information](#): Presents general information about the GDP in the Bahamas

3. Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

[Governance Indicators Database](#): Presents indicators and statistics about the Bahamas

4. The World Bank (WB)

[World Development Indicators](#): Presents indicators and statistics about the Bahamas

[Doing Business](#): The World Bank and International Finance Corporation compile statistics and indicators on the "Ease of Doing Business" in The Bahamas. Bahamas is ranked 84 out of 185 economies per indicator, there is a list of the economy's distance to frontier (DTF) measure, and there are additional tables summarizing key indicators for each topic and benchmarked against regional and high-income economy (OECD) averages.

5. The United Nations (UN)

[World Statistics Pocketbook](#): Contains a series of economic, social, trade profile and environmental statistics and indicators.

By Country: Publications and Research Studies

1. Organization of American States (OAS)

[Public Management Guiding Institutions in the Americas](#) (2014). Organization of American States.

2. International Monetary Fund (IMF)

[The Bahamas: Financial Sector Stability Assessment](#) (2013). International Monetary Fund

3. The World Bank (WB)

[World Development 2014 – Risk and Opportunity: Managing Risk for Development](#) (2014). The World Bank

4. The United Nations (UN) - Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

[Economic Survey of the Caribbean 2010-2011: Improving economic prospects amid global recovery](#) (2011). Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean

Long-Term Vision

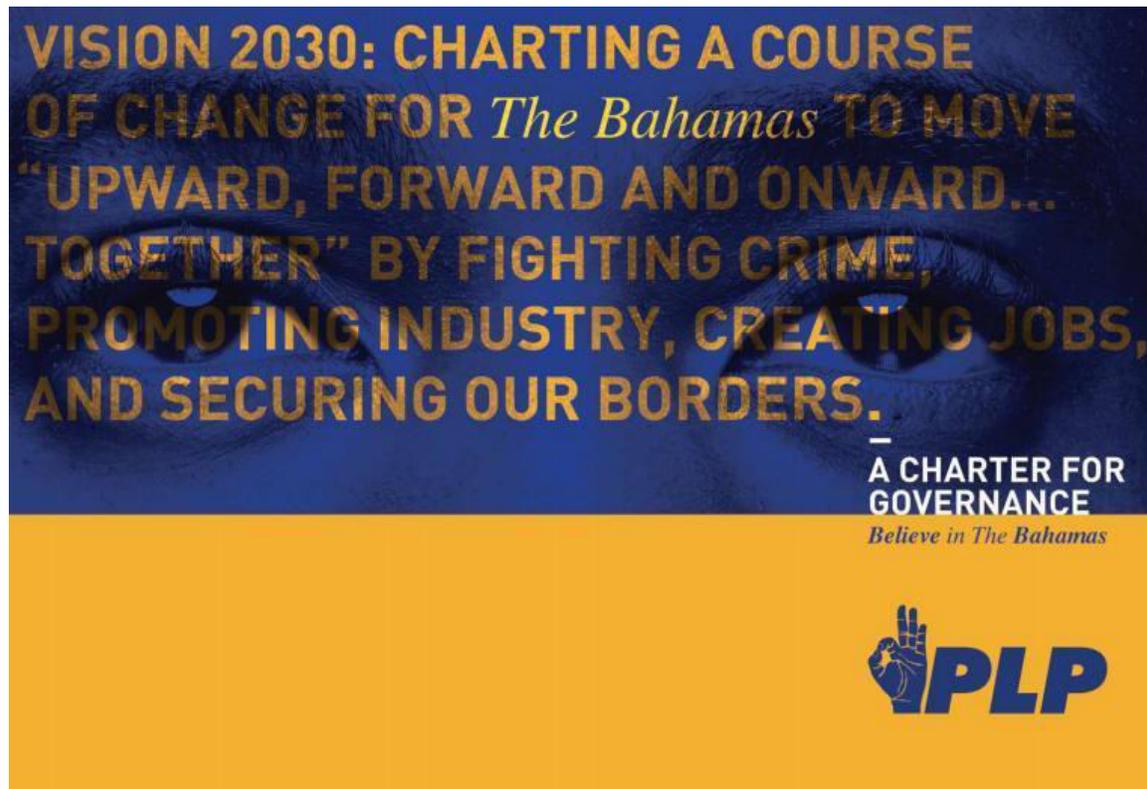
General Information

The Government's long-term development vision is detailed in the [Charter for Governance: "Vision 2030 – Charting a Course of Change in The Bahamas"](#), approved and published in 2012. The Charter identifies the issues affecting the country's economic performance and the well-being of the population - rapidly rising debt burden, high crime, high unemployment, poor skills in the labor market, excessive energy costs, concentration of productive activities in too few sectors, among others - as well as the outlines actions to address them.

The main areas of action of the Bahamian "Vision 2030" are the followings:

- a) Changing the economic course. This comprises the following actions:
 - Operation Home Restoration: A Mortgage Foreclosure Plan;
 - Help for those overwhelmed by consumer debts; and
 - Reducing the cost of electricity.
- b) Expanding the economy, through:
 - Creating jobs – Putting Bahamians first. In that regard, the Job creation Plan is divided into four (4) pillars: 1. Effective promotion of The Bahamas at home and abroad; 2. the removal of impediments to business so that Government facilitates the growth of business; 3. increasing opportunities to dramatically expand the role of Bahamians as employers through initiatives like the national initiative in resort development, which is part of our Tourism Plan; and 4. the government as a direct investor in carefully defined circumstances;
 - Removing impediments to business;
 - Policy framework for Government as a direct stimulant;
 - Reinventing the Bahamas Development Bank – Diversifying products to empower more Bahamians; and
 - Investment incentives for Bahamians: a. Encouraging employee stock ownership; b. Incentives to encourage the productive sectors; c. Fostering the growth of capital markets and a National Pension Plan; d. Business to benefit from trade agreements; e. Governance and accountability for regulators and government agencies providing services to the public; f. a tax ceiling to encourage the construction of luxury residences.
- c) Rescuing Grand Bahama with the following actions, among others:
 - A Ministry solely responsible for the restoration of Grand Bahama;
 - Issuing work permits;
 - Improvement of Hotel industry;
 - Getting closed hotels re-opened;
 - Getting partially completed resorts to completion;
 - Removing uncertainty;
 - Reducing the cost of electricity;
 - Tourism in Grand Bahama; and
 - Realizing the potential of agriculture;

- d) Development of the Family Islands. As part of a national development strategy, special attention and priority is given to implementing measures to greatly improve the social and economic conditions, as well as infrastructure in the Family Islands;
- e) Revitalizing tourism;
- f) Cultural and Creative Industries;
- g) Revolutionizing the agriculture industry, with the creation, among other initiatives of the Bahamas Food Sciences Institute (BFSI); the national food production development plan;
- h) Financial Services. To support the Financial Service Sectors, the initiatives are: Re-establish the Ministry of Financial Services and Investments to give dedicated full time leadership for the development and promotion of this industry; Strengthen links between the Financial Services Sector and tourism;
- i) Promoting Social Development and Improving Protection: Ensure on-going opportunities for public education on social legislation and programmes; Ensure the full implementation of the Child Protection Act, 2007; Ensure adequate staffing and training for social workers;
- j) Improve effectiveness of Public Service;
- k) Empower Local Governments; and
- l) National Vision for Education



Fuente: <http://myplp.org/>

National Strategies / Planning

General Information

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is making pivotal efforts in order to elaborate its first official National Development Plan. To that end, in 2014 the Government of the Bahamas created a special unit for the elaboration of the Strategic Plan, with the aim of providing a comprehensive overview of the economy, set policy direction for economic growth, and identify strategies, programmes, and projects.

In that regard, the Government's long-term vision, detailed in the 2012 [Charter for Governance: "Vision 2030 – Charting a Course of Change in The Bahamas"](#)¹ put the basis for the elaboration of the Bahamian National Strategy.

Public Budget

Introduction

In the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, the primary financial source is the Consolidated Fund. In that effect the Minister of Finance is in charge of preparing the annual estimate of revenues and expenditures for public services which will be laid before the house assembly. The estimates of expenditures shall show separately the sums required to meet statutory expenditures, as well as the sums required to meet any other expenditure and will be paid out of the Consolidated Fund ([Sections 128 and 130 of the Constitution of July 10th 1973](#))

The governmental entity responsible for the planning, submission and evaluation of the public budget is the [Ministry of Finance](#).

Likewise, the law that enhances the constitutional norms and provides more detailed provisions on the subject is the [Financial and Administration Audit of July 10th of 1973](#).

Institutional Framework:

In the Bahamas, the [Ministry of Finance](#) is the institution responsible for the planning, elaboration and submission of the country's Public Budget.

To that end, the Ministry of Finance is in charge of the following functions, among others ([Section 130 of the Constitution of the Bahamas](#) and [Part II and III of the Financial and Administration Audit](#)):

- a) introduce to the House Assembly an Appropriation Bill detailing the sums proposed to be expended during the financial year. The sums presented in the Appropriation Act for each financial year will represent the limit and extent of public expenditure for that year;
- b) prepare a supplementary estimate of expenditures which will be laid before and then voted by the House Assembly;
- c) authorize the making of advances from the Deposits Fund not exceeding in the aggregate five million dollars;

¹ For more information on the "Vision 2030", please see section "Long-term Vision" of this document.

d) limit or suspend any expenditure charged under any Appropriation Act or authorized by any resolution of the House of Assembly, if in his opinion the exigencies of the financial situation render such limitation or suspension necessary;

e) make regulations providing for, among others: 1. the collection, receipt, custody, issue, expenditure, due accounting for, care and management of all public moneys; 2. the keeping of records, the examination, inspection and checking of all receipts and payments and the keeping of all necessary books and accounts; and 3. the preparation of estimates.

Strategies and Mechanisms:

The [budget process](#) is divided into five (5) stages:

- **Pre-preparation stages:** where Economic forecast of the macroeconomic outlook is done. The forecast indicates whether it is prudent for the Government to adopt an expansionary fiscal stance;
- **Budget formulation:** when the Ministry of Finance puts the budget-plan together; line items amounts are determined and documented in accordance to fiscal targets;
- **Enactment:** when the budget plan is debated, altered, and approved by the legislative branch of Government;
- **Implementation:** when the spending warrants are issued and actual revenue collection and expenditure takes place in accordance to the budget; and
- **Evaluation:** when the actual expenditure and revenue collection of the budget is accounted for and assessed in accordance with the approved budget. Ongoing review of performance is a vital function to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Government agencies. Therefore, in parallel with the work outlined above, all spending and revenue agencies are expected to review their performance in the past year so as to bring forward improvements into the current financial year. Where issues are significant, reports may be made to Cabinet.

Likewise, for what concerns the budget formulation, the constitutional provisions states that [Minister of Finance](#) shall, in respect of each financial year, at the earliest convenient moment, introduce in the House of Assembly an Appropriation Bill containing - under appropriate heads for the several services required - the estimated aggregated sums which are proposed to be expended during that financial year ([Section 130 of the Constitution of the Bahamas](#)).

Moreover, the Parliament may also provide for the establishment of Contingencies Funds, which consists of issues from the Consolidated Fund not exceeding in the aggregate twenty million dollars or such greater sum as the House of Assembly may by resolution approve to defray unforeseen expenditure ([Section 9 of the Financial and Administration Audit of 1973](#)).

Professionalized Civil Service

Introduction

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas has developed several legal instruments in order to improve the country's public service. In that regard, the legislation of reference is: 1. [Chapter VIII of the Bahamian Constitution, of July 10th 1967](#); 2. the [Public Service Act, of April 17th 1969](#); 3. the [Public Service Commission Regulations, of February 1st 1971](#); 4. the [General Orders of the Public Service Commission](#); and 5. the [Employment Act of January 1st 2002](#).

The institution responsible for the planning of public policies on civil service and their consequent implementation and follow-up is the [Ministry of Public Service](#). Likewise, the [Constitution](#) created also the [Public Service Commission \(PSC\)](#), as entity in charge for all personnel matters, excluding Police, Judicial and Legal Officers ([Art. 107 of the Constitution](#)).

The [PSC](#) has the function to make appointments to public offices, as well as to remove and to exercise disciplinary control over public officers. It consists of a Chairman and not less than two nor more than four other members, who are appointed by the Governor-General, acting on the recommendation of the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition ([Art. 107 of the Constitution](#)).

Institutional Framework

The [Ministry of Public Service](#) is the institution responsible for the planning, elaboration and implementation of the public policies related to the subject.

The [Ministry of Public Service](#) has the following [structure](#): 1. Administration Unit; 2. Accounts Unit; 3. Human resource Unit; 4. Pensions Unit; 5. Registry Unit; 6. Registry Unit; 7. Special Projects and Research Unit.

The primary mission of the [Ministry of Public Service](#) is to maximize productivity in the Public Service by providing efficient, effective and equitable human resource services to Public Officers and the wider community through the formulation and dissemination of policies.

Strategies and Mechanisms

This Guide has organized the Professionalized Civil Service in the following critical sections:

1. Entrance into the civil service

A vacancy within the Public Service of the Bahamas, unless the Public Service Commission otherwise directs, shall be notified to the public by advertisement in the Local Press in order to give the possibility to any Bahamian citizen to apply ([Section 17 of the Public Service Commission Regulations](#)).

Where the appointment is subject to a probation period, this shall not be in any case less than twelve (12) months. In that regard, six (6) weeks before the expiration of the probationary period, the responsible officer shall consider whether the employee should be confirmed in an established post; should serve a further period on probation; or should not remain in the public service. In case of confirmation after the probationary period, the process is the following ([Section 28](#)):

- The Agency will submit a recommendation on behalf of the officer for confirmation, along with the Performance Appraisal Report;
- The Department of Public Service confirms a public officer and advises the agency accordingly; and
- The officer will receive a letter of confirmation of appointment, which states the appointment terms, agency assignment, and salary.

2. Training

The Bahamian Public Service grants the possibility to its officers to apply for a [Paid Study Leave](#), also known as [In-Service Training Awards](#); as well as for [Unpaid Study Leave](#). A Study Leave is generally granted for Bachelor's and Master's degree level or Diploma and Certificate levels.

In order to be eligible for a [Paid Study Leave](#), the officer must meet the following requirements:

- a) Complete three years of service and be confirmed in his/her appointment; and
- b) fill out and submit an Application for Study Leave Form to the immediate supervisor for approval and signature.

After the submission of the Application, the [process of evaluation](#) is the following:

- The approved application, the letter of request and supporting documents are forwarded to the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Department of Public Service;
- The In-Service Selection Board makes a recommendation and submits this to the minister responsible for the Public Service for consideration;
- The minister responsible for the Public Service prepares a recommendation for the Public Service Commission for final consideration;
- The Public Service Commission makes a determination regarding the In-Service Training Award and returns this to the Department of Public Service;
- Department of Public Service will advise the agency and the officer in writing;

For what concerns the [Unpaid Study Leave](#), this can be granted to public officials who have completed one (1) year of service and have been confirmed to the appointment.

In that regard, the [process of application and approval](#) is as follows:

- The officer must submit a letter of request and supporting documents to immediate supervisor;
- The supervisor shall forward the letter of request to the Human Resource section, who submits the request to the Permanent Secretary or the Head of Department for approval;
- Once approved by the Permanent Secretary, the Human Resources Section must make a recommendation to the Department of Public Service; and
- The Permanent Secretary of the Department of Public Service must approve the request, which is then returned to the agency who advises the officer accordingly.

[Unpaid Study Leave](#) may be rejected based on the needs of the agency at the time.

Likewise, when an officer is required by The Government to undertake a course of training or study in the interest of The Public Service, he/she will be granted study leave on full salary. To that end, the training or study leave can last up to about six (6) months. In that in which the

training is longer, the officer may be granted additional leave on full pay up to a maximum of twelve months in all to enable him to complete the course ([Public Service Commission General Orders Chapter 16](#)).

3. Promotion and assessment

In considering the claim of an officer for promotion, the requirements to be taken into account are merit, ability, seniority, experience and formal qualifications ([Section 16 of the Public Service Commission Regulations](#)).

An officer may be promoted by one or more of the [following methods](#):

a) Service Wide Promotion Exercise. This exercise occurs once a year, usually in July. The officers in the following categories may be considered during this exercise:

- Office Managers;
- Executive Officers;
- Secretarial;
- Clerical; and
- Registry Personnel.

b) Assessment Exercises for Promotion. Assessments are offered for eligible officers who have reached the level of:

- Chief Clerk;
- Executive Officer;
- Chief Executive Officer;
- Office Manager; and
- Senior Assistant Secretary.

c) Other Promotions. All other officers may be promoted at any time throughout the year if eligible for the post recommended. In that regard, requirements are:

- The minimum academic qualifications required;
- Overall above average ratings on his Annual Performance Appraisals;
- The minimum experience required for the post; and
- Justification for being promoted.

4. Remuneration

Salaries and remuneration of all Bahamians public officers shall be paid out of the sums appropriated by the Parliament through the Public Budget ([Section 3 of the Public Service Act of April 17th 1969](#)).

Every public officer appointed to an office, shall enter the lowest point of the salary scale provided for that appointment, unless the Governor-General approves a higher salary scale. The increment of the salary begins at the anniversary of the first day of the month in which the officer was appointed. In that regard, no officer may receive an increment of salary beyond the efficiency bar, until he/she has achieved a level of efficiency and/or responsibility to justify the passing of the bar ([Sections 5 and 6 of the Public Service Act of 1969](#)).

5. Disengagement

In the Bahamas, the main causes for disengagement from the Public Service are:

- a) Retirement. The mandatory retiring age is 65 years. An officer may retire earlier in the following circumstances: 1. in the public interest; 2. ill health, where the officer is certified to be, incapable by reasons of infirmity of mind or body of discharging the duties of his office and the disability is likely to be permanent; 3. abolition of office, where an officer's post is no longer required, or if his/her services are dispensed with in order to facilitate improvements in the organization of his Department, or; on grounds of financial stringency; and 4. on completion of 30 years service in a pensionable office (Public Service Commission General Orders, Chapter 7).
- b) Resignation. A public officer may retire from the Public Service at any time, giving a notice at least one (1) month before. Officers who completed at least ten (10) years of continuous monthly service or more are eligible for a gratuity equivalent to 4% of the annual salary at the time of resignation, multiplied by the number of completed years of service. The resignation letter must be accepted by the Department of Public Service, which shall publish it in the Gazette; and
- c) Dismissal, as the most severe consequence after a disciplinary proceeding.

Coordination

General Information

Coordination strategies and mechanisms are issues which have high importance in the Agenda of the Government of Bahamas, which is making pivotal efforts in order to plan and implement public policies on the matter.

The main instrument of coordination and control of the Government is the Cabinet of Ministries. It is necessary for the Cabinet to comprise at least nine (9) Ministers inclusive of the Prime Minister and Attorney General ([Art. 72 of the Constitution of 1973](#)).

All Ministers must be Members of Parliament either the House of Assembly or the Senate. The number of Ministers from the Senate is limited to three (3). In addition, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are required to be members of the House of Assembly.

The [functions](#) of the Cabinet comprise the final determination of government policy, control of government activities and coordination of government Ministries and Departments. It meets at least once per week.

On the other hand, the Bahamas counts with other inter-institutional coordination entities, as **The Bahamas National Environment, Science and Technology Commission**, - formerly the National Inter-Ministerial Commission on Science and Technology - headed by the [Ministry of Environment and Housing](#), created in 1989 to coordinate the national response to environmental, scientific, and technological matters referred to the Government of The Bahamas by international organizations. Its main [functions](#) are, among others:

- a) to serve as The Bahamas national focal point and official point of contact for all international organizations on matters relating to the environment, science and technology;
- b) to coordinate matters relating to international conventions, treaties, protocols and agreements relating to the environment to which The Bahamas is, or will become, a party or signatory;
- c) to coordinate the national effort with the aim to: 1. develop national environmental strategies and related action plans; and 2. propose legislation to enforce the provisions of the national environmental plans and policies;
- d) to represent the Government in discussions and negotiations with representatives of regional and international organizations and foreign governments, where appropriate, on matters relating to the environment, science or technology;
- e) to serve as a forum which will encourage open dialogue, thereby facilitating the exchange of information and improved communication among the Government agencies and private sector entities responsible for, or actively involved with matters relating to the environment, science and technology;
- j) to prepare papers on various issues to assist in national policy formation; and
- k) to conduct site visits for projects under environmental impact assessment (EIA) review.

Gender Perspective

General Information

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is making pivotal efforts to adopt policies that seek the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in the society.

To that end, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas is part of important international important conventions and mechanisms related gender affairs, namely: 1. [the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women "Convention of Belém Do Pará"](#) - ratified on May 3rd, 1995 and its [Inter-American Mechanism \(MESECVI\)](#); and the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) – ratified on October 6th 1993; among other.

The institution responsible for the elaboration of policies related to gender affairs, as well as to oversee the proper implementation of the international conventions, is the [Ministry of Social Services and Community Development](#), through the [Bureau of Women's Affairs](#), whose main functions are, among others:

- a) Liaise with local Non-governmental Women's Organizations for better co-operation and collaboration on women's issues at the national, regional and international levels;
- b) Coordinate the work of the National Women's Advisory Council, which comprises of women from a cross section of society, appointed by the government to advise the Minister with responsibility for women's affairs on matters that affect women, with a view to addressing them;
- d) Represent the Government at National, regional and international meetings on woman/gender and development matters, including the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Organization of American States/Inter-American Commission of Women (OAS/CIM); and
- e) Monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of international conventions adopted by the government that impact woman

It is noteworthy that the government of the Bahamas is carrying out several initiatives in order to implement gender equality in the country, one of them being the [Constitutional Amendment to End Gender Discrimination](#), as part of the government's initiative of a [Constitutional Commission](#) in order to conduct a comprehensive review of The Constitution of the Bahamas. The amendment would be added to [the Constitution of the Bahamas under section 26 "Protection from Discrimination on the Grounds of Race"](#).

Evaluation of Policies / Programs

General Information

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is realizing important efforts in order to plan and implement a Monitoring and Evaluation System in the country.

This would be developed together with the National Development Plan, which follows the 2012 [Charter for Governance: "Vision 2030 – Charting a Course of Change in The Bahamas"](#), the Government's Long-Term Vision that sets a series of national goals and objective for the economic and social growth and development of the Bahamas.

Information and Communication Technology

General Information

The Government of the Bahamas understands the importance of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for the proper development of its citizens and the country, promoting the use of technology in schools as a mean for children and students to properly learn on the use of technology and its importance to The Bahamas in the world.

The government ministry in charge of the promotion of technology and communication developments is [The Ministry, of Education, Science and Technology](#), whose functions related to the development of ICTs are:

- Provide high quality teaching/learning experiences which foster functional literacy, promotes tolerance, discipline and responsibility and meets the educational needs of every person;
- Provide an integrated approach to Information Communication Technology, to increase the efficiency and the effectiveness of the administrative process and to support educational programs; and
- Preserve and make accessible the literary, documentary and cultural history and heritage of The Bahamas and to promote literacy for all of its citizens; and
- Facilitate technology aided instruction

The strategies that the Commonwealth of the Bahamas has taken on the subject are, among others:

a) the implementation of the [the Bahamas e-Government Portal](#), which allows to have access to the individual websites of each governmental department and ministry. It also makes available every online service the government provides for its citizens. [Some of these online services are:](#)

- Assistance for Payment of Utilities;
- Assistance for Persons Experiencing Domestic Violence;
- Application for a Governmental Guaranteed Loan;
- Antenatal Care;
- Agriculture Training Seminars and Programmes;
- Agricultural Business Advisory Services; and

- Adolescent healthcare

b) [The Science and Technology Resource Network](#), in order to promote partnerships among educators, scientists, NGO's, Industry, youth, the media and other major groups who communicate key issues on sustainable development. In order to do this, the government intends to activate the Science and technology Resources Network. This network serves as a liaison between schools, resource person's and sites of scientific technological interest to the community; and

c) [The SSA Financial Management and Inventory System](#), created by Public Treasury on September 2008. This program started to become implemented in the Ministry of Education and is planned to be implemented in all ministries. Officers of the Supplies Section of the Ministry of Education were trained in order to use the Inventory Module software. They also started to organize the warehouse and coding the inventory items in the Supplies Section. The next phase was to take a physical count of the inventory items, and after that the information was keyed into the inventory system.

Transparency and Access to Information

General Information

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, although not counting with a Law on Transparency and Access to Information, is making pivotal efforts to strengthen transparency in the government and guarantee access to information to all citizens. In that regard, the constitutional provisions state that no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions, to receive and impart ideas and information without interference ([Art. 23 of the Constitution of 1973](#)).

It is also noteworthy that, according to the index of Corruption Perception 2013 prepared by the [Transparency International](#) - index that evaluates the perception of the population about corruption in the Public Sector – the Bahamas is ranked in 22nd place out of 175.

The national entity responsible to ensure effective communications between the government and its citizens is the [Bahamas Information Services Department \(BIS\)](#), created in 1974. In general, the functions recognized to the [BIS](#) are, among others:

- a) to advise the Government in relation to the dissemination of information on the policies and activities of the government;
- b) to promote the programmes and role of the government;
- c) to assist the government with public relations, and its officers sit on many governmental committees, offering advice on developing and publicizing various programmes; and
- d) to serve the government, government ministries, departments and affiliated services, regardless of the political party controlling the country.

The [BIS](#) serves also as a link to many national news agencies, especially those in the Family Islands, and offers its services digitally for more immediate access.

Decentralization

General Information

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is a bicameral parliamentary constitutional monarchy headed by Queen Elizabeth II as the queen of the Bahamas, represented by a governor-general ([Section 32 of the Constitution of July 10th 1973](#)).

The commonwealth of the Bahamas is made up of 700 islands, cays and islets. Its territory is made up of 32 local government districts: Aklins; Berry Islands; Bimini; Black Point, Exuma; Cat island; Central Abaco; Central Andros; Central Eleuthera; City of Freeport, Grand Bahama; Corrked Island; East Grand Bahama; Exuma; Grand Cay, Abaco; Harbour Island, Eleuthera; Hope Town, Abaco; Inagua; Long Island; Mangrove Cay, Andros; Mayaguana; Moore's Island, Abaco; North Abaco; North Andros; North Eleuthera; Ragged Island; Rum Cay; San Salvador; South Abaco; South Andros; South Eleuthera; Spanish Wells, Eleuthera; West Grand Bahama; and Green Turtle Cay.

In that regard, The local government system has been established in 1996, through the [Local government Act of June 25th 1996](#), which introduced 23 District Councils covering the 29 inhabited islands. The Districts have now increased since 1999 to the 32 local governments present today.

To a national level, the entity responsible for the development of public policies related to decentralization, as well as for the relations with local authorities is the [Department of Local Government](#), whose areas of responsibility are: 1. Local Government; 2. Relations with local government authorities; and 3. Local improvement associations.

For what concerns the local government structure, it comprises ([Part III and IV of the Local Government Act of 1996](#)):

- a) The Town Committee, responsible for, among others ([Section 9](#)):
 - providing for general health and sanitation;
 - providing for the collection and removal of all refuse from any public place; and
 - providing for the upkeep, maintenance and establishment, of monuments, cemeteries, children's playgrounds, recreation grounds, parks, public gardens, among others.

- b) The District Council, whose functions are, among others ([Section 10](#)):
 - To grant building permits;
 - To exercise the powers of the Minister of Finance;
 - To make provision in respect of public transportation, the maintenance and upkeep of public buildings, and Government-owned airport terminal buildings, hospitals, clinics and their environs; and
 - To make provision for the maintenance and upkeep of public school buildings and their environs.

It is noteworthy that the Bahamian local government system provides different mechanism to assure citizen participation in the local decision making process. In that regard, a public town area meeting has to be held at least once a year where local authorities must discuss their plans and projects and also the budget available to them to the general public. Moreover, town

committees and councils must meet once per month in public space ([Section 35 of the Local Government Act of 1996](#)).

Quality of public services

General Information

As part of the [Caribbean Community \(CARICOM\)](#), the Commonwealth of the Bahamas is also part of the [CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality \(CROSQ\)](#), the regional centre for promoting efficiency and competitive production in goods and services, through the process of standardization and the verification of quality. In this regard, the [CROSQ](#) aims to support international competitiveness for the enhancement of social and economic development of the region.

To that end, the Bahamas signed and ratified the [Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas Establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy](#) of July 5th 2001, an international legal instrument whose main objectives are ([Art. 6](#)):

- a) improved standards of living and work;
- b) full employment of labour and other factors of production;
- c) accelerated, co-ordinated and sustained economic development and convergence;
- d) expansion of trade and economic relations with third States;
- e) enhanced levels of international competitiveness;
- f) organization for increased production and productivity;
- g) the achievement of a greater measure of economic leverage and effectiveness of Member States in dealing with third States, groups of States and entities of any description;
- h) enhanced co-ordination of Member States' foreign and foreign economic policies; and
- i) enhanced functional co-operation, including: 1. more efficient operation of common services and activities for the benefit of its peoples; 2. accelerated promotion of greater understanding among its peoples and the advancement of their social, cultural and technological development; 3. intensified activities in areas such as health, education, transportation, telecommunications

The government body in charge of the coordination of the activities within the [CROSQ](#) is the Standards Bureau of the [Ministry of Financial Services and Investments](#).

Citizen Participation in Public Management

General Information

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is making important efforts to implement the principles of civil empowerment and citizen participation as means to improve governance, public policies and services.

As member of the [Caribbean Community \(CARICOM\)](#), the Bahamas is State Party to the [Charter of the Civil Society for the Caribbean Community](#), adopted on February 19th 2007, which is a document that outlines civil participation and empowerment for the entire Caribbean region and aims to strengthen confidence in governance by creating a truly participatory political environment to promote genuine consultation in the process of governance, among its other goals.

[Article XVII](#) of the Charter defines “good governance” as being “just, open and accountable”. It acknowledges that the roles of government, social partners and civil society are complementary and central good governance, and that it is the role of the States to define and delineate the rights and responsibilities of each to ensure equal participation. It requires that the States establish effective systems of consultation between the Government and the people to promote and facilitate civil participation in the democratic process.

Additionally, [Article XXIV](#) entitled “Awareness and Responsibilities of the People” makes an express declaration of the critical role of civil society in maintaining good governance. It charges the States with the express responsibility to foster awareness, support and programs for sound values and positive attitudes to drive individual and community participation in the following:

- a) The inculcating, nurturing and demonstration of love of one’s country;
- b) The participation in the electoral process;
- c) The development of a positive work ethic at all levels in society in the recognition of the responsibilities of the people in the areas of production, the economy and the provision of goods and services;
- d) The sensitizing of the people to the importance of continuous skill upgrading, training and broadening of their skills and expertise;
- e) The building of self-reliance and the engagement in self-help activities, whether alone or in community with others;
- f) The promotion of awareness of parents to cooperate with and support the school system and programmes aimed at the character formation of students;
- g) Special consideration and support of the young, aged, the disabled and other vulnerable groups;
- h) The resolution of interpersonal and domestic disputes by peaceful means, such as mediation, reconciliation and otherwise;
- i) The caring and protection of the environment;
- j) The preservation and protection of public property; and
- k) The promotion, establishment and maintenance of community-based organizations