

INTRODUCTION

The future has arrived. Now we have to ensure that we have a place in it

We are all contributors to the emergence of the global economy. Not only are goods, services and capital globally circulated, but for the first time production on a planetary scale occurs in real time. Along with the emergence of the global economy have emerged global cultural exchange and a new global political order.

Globalization, which is made possible by the ICT revolution, has profoundly changed the rules of the game.

Efficiency more than ever is now an indicator of competitiveness. Nations, corporations and people that find the means to become more efficient will advance and prosper.

Countries that provide better governance, with more transparent and efficient bureaucracies and that are able to provide a legal and regulatory framework that allows for free and fair competition, will see greater investment flows, create more jobs, and ultimately provide a better quality of life for their populace.

Companies that make the best use of scarce resources, and that are able to produce more and better goods and services using less inputs, will win in a competitive marketplace.

The same is true with each and every individual. Education and experience, though still critical, will no longer be enough. They have to be able to adapt, and learn new technologies and new ways of doing business if they are to prosper in the 21st century. And the learning curve is only going to grow steeper, requiring them to become more efficient – doing and learning more, in less time.

It is this drive and demand for greater efficiency that is driving the growth of the information and communications technology (ICT) sector.¹

And yet, it is also ICT itself that is opening more and more opportunities for greater efficiency. ICT allows governments to deliver its services faster and with greater transparency. ICT enables companies to tap into the competitive edge of

¹ Information and communications technology (ICT) as used in this document refers to “the totality of electronic means to collect, store, process and present information to end-users in support of their activities. It consists, among others, of computer systems, office systems and consumer electronics, as well as networked information infrastructure, the components of which include the telephone system, the Internet, fax machines and computers.” (Section 2, Executive Order No. 269, dated 12 January 2004)

particular nations in order to provide higher quality services cost effectively, and on a global scale. And, with ICT, individuals now have more information at their fingertips, and are more connected than ever before. They have more power, than ever before. The Sovereign Individual is emerging.

ICT, in other words, is at the heart of a virtuous cycle that can lead to better governance, growing economies and more promising lives for all.

In the Philippines, ICT is already widely recognized as a potent tool for socio-economic upliftment. No less than the 1987 Constitution gives cognizance to ICT's role in nation-building. The Arroyo Administration's Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) identifies ICT as one of the drivers of jobs creation and investments.

The need for an ICT Roadmap

The undeniable importance of ICT, as a major driver of the Philippine economy, and as a critical tool for better governance, corporate performance, and individual achievement, called for the development of this Strategic Roadmap. This Roadmap would lay down the Philippine government's strategies and programs, and which would signal the country's resolve and commitment to developing a vibrant, accessible and world-class ICT sector.

This is also envisioned to create wider awareness on ICT; identify key initiatives to rally all stakeholders and encouraging them to undertake initiatives that complement the short and medium-term ICT development plans of government; provide investment opportunities; lay out sustainable strategies for the further development of ICTs; define short and medium term objectives; provide the private sector with a reliable frame of reference to heighten their action planning for the future; and increase coordination in implementing ICT programs and achieving the desired impact and outcomes.

The global economy is dependent and is shaped by the benefits arising from the use of ICTs. However, if the Philippines intends to participate in such an economy, this requires the country to develop strategies and programs in the form of policies and implementation plans. This Roadmap aims to therefore serve as the single Masterplan on ICT which shall be adopted by the entire country.

METHODOLOGY

This Roadmap was prepared by the Chairman, Commissioners and staff of the Commission for Information and Communications Technology (CICT).

Over the past three months, each of the CICT's main groups (Strategic Business Development, Human Capital Development, eGovernment, and Information Infrastructure), together with key representatives from the private sector, civil society and other national and local government units, conducted brainstorming, focus groups, and other types of strategic and consultative planning sessions to identify and formulate the strategies, programs and plans that would define this Roadmap.

Two workshops were also conducted for the CICT as a whole to identify synergies between and among the groups, and to consolidate the efforts into a coherent Roadmap.

Two formal presentations, in addition to numerous informal discussions, were given to industry and civil society representatives to validate the Roadmap against their perspective and experience. Subsequently, and the Roadmap was refined to reflect the insights gleaned from the consultations.

This initial strategic planning process culminated with the drafting of this present Roadmap.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CICT is committed to realizing the goal of a “*people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life.*” All citizens should have access to basic government services, information, and quality education through the use of appropriate and affordable ICT technologies. It should be the government’s primary concern to ensure that appropriate connectivity is available in every local government units and public schools.

CICT believes that the Government’s primary role in ICT development is to provide an enabling policy, legal and regulatory environment. An enabling environment for ICT development requires good governance at all levels, and a supportive, transparent and pro-competitive policy and regulatory framework.

Moreover, the government must acts as a catalyst and its involvement should be predictable, developmental, transparent and efficient. Regulation, where necessary, should promote a level playing field and should not hinder companies from competing in free and fair markets.

However, CICT also recognize that market forces alone cannot guarantee the full development of an inclusive information society. But in view of the present liberalized stature of the ICT industry which resulted to the entry of numerous players in the past, the government’s role on ICT infrastructure roll-out should have to be limited. Relatively, with government’s prevailing financial woes, where programs on education, agriculture, health, debt servicing among others needs to be prioritized, it should instead play the role of an “enabler”.

CICT is devoted to a “MultiStakeholder Approach” to ICT for Development.

The private sector, civil society, civic organizations, international organizations and other partners have an important role and responsibility in the development of the Philippine Information Society.

In order to ensure the success and sustainability of ICT initiatives, stakeholders should be empowered by ensuring their direct participation during its conceptualization, planning, and implementation.

The primary role of the private sector is to provide investments, capitals and other resources. Initiatives and projects to develop the ICT sector will have a higher chance of success and sustainability if these are market-led, rather than government-led.

Concerned LGUs, schools and other community based organizations/groups, must be directly consulted and their specific requirement/s determined. Further, they should have active involvement in the day-to-day operations of ICT facilities within their respective area of jurisdiction.

CICT sees ICT is a tool for Sustainable Development. The national objective is not only to develop the ICT sector of the national economy but to ensure the propagation and widespread use of ICT in all aspects of the Filipinos' life.

Plans and programs to use ICT for developmental purposes should be:

- Accessible. Online access to services must be extended to all citizens and must cater to the needs of different stakeholders.
- Available. ICT services to all citizens anytime. It should be available 24 x 7 x366, at home, at the office, in schools, in libraries and other convenient public locations.
- Secure and Accountable. Standards should be set for resolving security, privacy, non-repudiation and authentication issues to engender trust in the use of ICT services.
- Interoperable. Online services should be able to link seamlessly to existing back-end systems and across different agencies and platforms.
- Sustainable. It should eventually transaction-based, cost-effective, revenue generating and self-financing.

CICT will promote the development digital content that is relevant and meaningful to Filipinos. The goal is to make available online the Philippines' stock of content and provide all citizens with easy access to the information that is important to their lives.

Digital content is broadly defined as encompassing educational materials, national heritage collections, government information, research databases, literature, history and entertainment and resources in the various Philippine languages – particularly the 8 major Philippine languages

CICT endeavors to create a safe, trustworthy online environment for all Filipinos. We shall take preventive measures to guard against abusive uses of ICTs, such as illegal and other acts like all forms of child abuse, including pedophilia and child pornography, and trafficking in, and exploitation of, human

beings. While we will take all appropriate security and preventive measures, we shall also ensure that the privacy, and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and expression of individuals would be respected.

Finally, CICT needs to transform itself into a strong organization to facilitate ICT development and ICT for development in the country. We must build a “lean and mean”, efficient and effective organization out of the various units that now comprise CICT. We will reduce the total number of personnel of the organization. And those who will be retained will undergo retooling and retraining so that the organization has the necessary skills to plan and manage projects effectively. It is envisioned that the vast majority of future CICT would be outsourced to the private sector.

STRATEGIC PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES FOR ICT

ENSURING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO ICT

All citizens should have access to basic government services, information, and quality education through the use of appropriate and affordable ICT technologies. The Philippine government is committed to ensuring universal access to ICT, and will prioritize programs to benefit marginalized sectors and underserved areas.

The Community e-Center Program

At the heart of the government's efforts to bridge the digital divide is the Community e-Center Program (CeCP).

Partnering with private sector, local governments and civil society stakeholders, the Philippine government helps to establish various community-based options for telecommunications and internet access. Various trainings, specifically adapted to particular needs are also provided to ensure the sustainability and effective operations management of the centers.

- **Internet in Schools (iSchools)** project aims to provides public high schools with computers with broadband internet connectivity, complemented by educators' training (ICT Literacy/Competency Training for Teachers, Lab Management, Sustainability), tech support, and monitoring and evaluation.
- **eCare Centers** are specially designed to provide access and training programs for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). The target is to establish one eCare Center in each region.
- **eLGU CeCs** enable local government units to deliver services more efficiently, while providing their respective constituents with access to the Internet and other ICTs. The project also recognizes model websites and best practices in the local government to encourage replication of useful and innovative applications.
- **Regional ICT Centers** will spur regional development through the use of ICT in education, commerce and governance and spearhead the building of local e-marketplaces or a one-stop-shops for e-commerce, e-learning and e-government services.

Low Cost Computing

PC ng Bayan initiative was launched by CICT in 2005 in order to provide low cost computers to the population. At present these computers are available through DBM's procurement service.

To further reduce the cost of access to ICT goods and services and to help combat the use of unlicensed software particularly in government agencies and educational institutions, CICT is promoting the use Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) as an alternative to pirated commercial software. Towards these goals it is distributing **FOSS CD Kits** which compiles software options that come with quality features that match those on commercial products and are supported by the open community of developers and users.

National Broadband Plan

The provision of adequate bandwidth is key to ICT development. Government will ensure that adequate bandwidth to support widespread and intensive ICT use is available throughout the country. The targets are as follows:

Provision of Broadband Connectivity – Number of Public Access Points

Location	Target
Key cities, municipalities, & urbanized barangays	<i>100% by 2010, to be undertaken by the private sector</i>
1st, 2nd, 3rd, & 4th class municipalities	<i>100% by 2010, to be undertaken jointly by CICT and the private sector</i>
Rural barangays	<i>55% by 2010, to be undertaken jointly by CICT and the private sector</i>

Provision of Broadband Connectivity – Capacity & Quality of Access

Location	Target
Key cities, municipalities	<i>200 simultaneous users for each access point; at least 5 access points by 2010, to be led by the private sector</i>
1st, 2nd, 3rd, & 4th class municipalities	<i>100 simultaneous users for each access point; at least 2 access points by 2010, to be undertaken jointly by the CICT and the private sector</i>
Remaining municipalities	<i>5 simultaneous users for 1 access point by 2010, to be undertaken jointly by the CICT and the private sector</i>
Urbanized barangays	<i>100 simultaneous users for each access point; at least 5 access points by 2010, to be led by the private sector</i>
Rural barangays	<i>1 user for 1 access point by 2010, to be undertaken jointly by the CICT and the private sector</i>

Provision of Broadband Connectivity – Public High Schools

Location	Target
Key cities and municipalities	<i>100% by 2010, jointly undertaken by the private sector, LGUs, DepEd, & CICT</i>
1st, 2nd, 3rd, & 4th class municipalities	<i>80% by 2010, jointly undertaken by the private sector, LGUs, DepEd, & CICT</i>
Remaining municipalities	<i>50% by 2010, jointly undertaken by the private sector, LGUs, DepEd, & CICT</i>

Last Mile Initiative

Government firmly believes in the preeminent role of the private sector in providing ICT goods and services to the public, and that the role of government in this respect is to ensure that the ideal legal, policy and regulatory environment is in place to ensure free and fair competition in the marketplace.

Nonetheless, government also realizes that there are areas, either too remote or disadvantaged, that precludes the entry of private sector players at the present time.

Government will take all steps necessary to ensure that all citizens have access to ICT goods and services, and will, principally through Community e-Centers, provide the last mile bridge to these unserved areas.

It should be emphasized, nonetheless, that this initiative is mainly a fulfillment of government’s social obligations, and that government is fully prepared to yield the delivery of access to ICT once the private sector is ready to expand into these areas.

**DEVELOPING HUMAN CAPITAL
FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

A well developed human capital base of a nation plays an important role in its development.

While education and training are the most important investments in human capital, expenditures on medical care, and even lectures on the virtues of punctuality and honesty are also investments in *human capital*.² Thus, government’s human capital agenda vis-à-vis ICT is not simply to develop the

² According Gary Becker, a Nobel Laureate in Economics, it is called human capital “because people cannot be separated from their knowledge, skills, health, or values in the way they can be separated from their financial and physical assets.” *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economic* <http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/HumanCapital.html>

ICT skills of its people but to harness the power of ICT for education and life-long learning.

But investing in human capital is unlike other capital investment. Human capital investments are typically on an incessant basis. However, they enjoy long term continuous returns. While it may be possible to shorten the gestation period of physical infrastructure investment, human capital investments will necessitate a fixed number of years.

Programs to develop Human Capital in the country include the following:

ICT Competency and Standards Development

The Philippine Government, through CICT, partners with concerned government and private sector stakeholders, as well as internationally recognized bodies to develop and formulate ICT competency standards. These competency guidelines and standards be used and applied in education and training, and help to professionalize ICT human resource in government and private sector through the design, formulation and administration of competency-based certification exams.

Specific projects include the creation of:

- **National ICT Competency Standards** which would indicate and rank (vendor-neutral) ICT-related knowledge and skills that an individual must possess at a recognized level of competence in specific ICT fields/areas. To date, the following draft standards have been formulated: National ICT Standards (NICS) - Basic; NICS – Advanced: NICS - Teachers.
- An **ICT Competency Assurance Body** which would be the implementing body that allows for the collation of necessary information to maintain the approved ICT standards by means of accreditation, certification, and coordination with concerned stakeholders

ICT for Education (ICT4E)

This Program aims to support the efforts of the Education sector in efforts to incorporate the use of ICT in education as well as in determining and gaining access to the infrastructure (hardware, software, telecommunications facilities, etc.), necessary to use and deploy learning technologies at all educational levels.

Ongoing initiatives under this Program include:

- **ICT in Education Masterplan** for all levels, including a National Roadmap for Faculty Development on ICT in Education. In 2005, CICT assisted the Department of Education and the Foundation for IT Education and

Development in formulating the *National Framework Plan for ICTs in Basic Education (2005-2010)*.

- Content and applications development through the **Open Content in Education Initiative (OCEI)** which will, among others, convert Department of Education's materials into interactive multimedia content, the development of applications for the use of schools, and conduct student and teacher competitions to promote the development of education-related web content.
- **iSchool WebBoard**, which will enable teachers to build and share online self-learning materials; and facilitate immediate access to useful references and interactive facilities in the Internet.
- **PhEdNet**, which is a "walled garden" that hosts educational, learning, and teaching materials and applications for use by Filipino students, their teachers and parents. All public high school will be part of this network with only DepEd-approved multimedia applications, materials, and mirrored Internet sites accessible from school PCs.
- **eSkwela** which establishes Community eLearning Centers for the out-of-school youth (OSY), providing them with ICT-enhanced alternative education opportunities.
- **eQuality Program** for tertiary education through partnerships with state universities and colleges (SUCs) to improve the quality of IT education and the use of ICT in education in the country, particularly outside of Metro Manila.
- **Digital Media Arts Program** which will build digital media skills for government using Open Source technologies. Particular beneficiary agencies include the Philippine Information Agency and other government media organizations, the Cultural Center of the Philippines, National Commission for Culture and the Arts and other government arts agencies, State Universities & Colleges, and local government units.
- **ICT Skills Strategic Plan** which will develop an inter-agency approach to identifying strategic, policy, and program/project recommendations to address the ICT skills demand - supply gap.

e-GOVERNANCE: USING ICT TO PROMOTE EFFICIENCY AND TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNMENT

Like the private sector, the Philippine government seeks to use ICT to become more efficient and responsive in the delivery of its services – from processing

business permits to more effective revenue generation to ensuring better law enforcement to providing social security benefit, among many others – to the general populace.

Equally important, ICT will also make government transactions and processes more transparent, increase accountability and reduce losses from graft, corruption and unnecessary leakages. Private sector bidders in competitive procurement transactions will have greater information, which should result in more informed bids, as well as greater confidence in government's credibility and trustworthiness. Processing of government-required applications or permits will be more open, and applicants be able to track the progress of their respective transactions. In this manner, government agencies and personnel will be held accountable to a higher standard of service, as well as a greater expectation of integrity and straightforward dealing.

Recognizing that the efficiency and credibility of government is a critical component of the legal and regulatory environment that businesses and investors consider in making decisions, the Philippines has designed and will implement the following programs and initiatives:

eGovernment Fund

The commitment of the government to enhance the delivery of government services is demonstrated by the creation of the e-Government Fund to finance priority government frontline ICT projects such as:

- The Bureau of Internal Revenue's Integrated Computerization Projects, which include the electronic filing and payment system, and BIR Data Warehouse;
- The Bureau of Custom's web-based applications to streamline processes and encourage transparent transactions;
- The National Computer Center's e-Local Government Units (LGUs) project to assist LGUs in the computerization of priority systems including the Real Property Tax System.

The Fund will continue to be CICT's primary lever to develop citizen-centric applications involves multiple government agencies.

CICT is also reviewing the rules governing the eGov Fund to ensure that it is used to fund more strategic projects.

Developing Common Applications for NGAs

Among the common applications that will developed are 1) Financial Information and Management System; 2) eProcurement.

Develop a policy to enhance accessibility, particularly for Persons With Disabilities to the government portal and websites. CICT will also issue guidelines to ensure a “common look and feel” of all government websites.

Government Communication Network

CICT will lead the development of an IP-based, nationwide communications network that would connect all government agencies.

Common, Shareable Government Intranet

Phase I	CICT-wide	✓ <i>By end of 2007, 100% of all functional units of the CICT will share a common ICT network</i>
Phase II	National Government Agencies	✓ <i>By end of 2006, 100% of all existing and planned ICT networks of NGAs will be inventoried</i> ✓ <i>By end of 2008, 100% of all NGAs will share a common ICT network</i>
Phase III	Provincial and Local Government Units	✓ <i>By mid 2007, 100% of all existing and planned ICT networks of all provincial and local government units will be inventoried</i> ✓ <i>By end of 2008, 100% of all provincial and local government units will share a common ICT network</i>

Establishment of Government IP Gateway and Internet Exchange

Phase I	Cebu as Main Hub	✓ <i>By end of 2006, an IP Gateway and Internet Exchange will be established at the Cebu Toll Center through the collaboration of CICT and an IP Gateway Operator</i>
Phase II	Davao as Secondary Hub	✓ <i>By mid 2007, another IP Gateway and Internet Exchange will be available at the Davao Toll Center to back up the Cebu Toll IP Gateway</i>

This IP-based government network will not only provide data communications but also VOIP services for all national government agencies (including their regional, provincial and other local offices).

CICT – through its IIMG – will perform the role as government’s overall network manager.

CIO Council

Chief Information Officers (CIOs) shall be appointed for every agency of government. Collectively, they will form the CIO Council and will work together to maximize the use and effectivity of government's ICT resources, and ensure better information on, and monitoring of the use of ICT to implement government's programs and priorities.

Under the leadership and guidance of the Commission for Information and Communications Technology (CICT) – the CIO Council will coordinate, and improve data sharing and network interoperability among the various agencies of government, subject to legal and policy considerations to protect privacy and security of information

Enhanced ICT Training for Government

The government is committed to developing a corps of highly skilled ICT professionals in government. The CICT therefore will design continuing initiatives to support the development of an ICT- enabled civil service, including the development of Government ICT Professionals' training and certification in eGovernment Project Management, IT Services Management, Applications Development, and Technology Solutions.

Revision of the Government Information Systems Plan (GISP)

The Government Information Systems Plan (GISP) or Philippine Government Online, envisioned an electronic bureaucracy that is widely and readily accessible to the Filipino people. It is a master plan that harnesses the potentials of information and communications technology (ICT) for good governance, and promotes transparency and accountability in government operations and transactions.

**STRATEGIC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
TO ENHANCE COMPETITIVENESS IN THE GLOBAL ICT MARKET**

The continued rise of the ICT sector in the Philippines is largely dependent on initiatives and the necessary resources that will help sustain its competitiveness. The roles of both private and government in this endeavor must be well established. The private sector should remain as the prime mover of the ICT industry with government playing the role of advocate, laying the ground work for regulations and polices that levels off the playing field for entrepreneurs and providing a business environment that can power and enable the economic dreams of the 21st century Filipino.

Given the present landscape of the ICT industry, critical programs and projects designed to facilitate and sustain growth should be implemented with expediency and resolve.

Workforce Mobilization Program

A partnership between the CICT and concerned agencies such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Technical Education and Skill Development Authority (TESDA) and other private training institutions, the Workforce Mobilization Program seeks to ensure a suitable match between available jobs and quality workers. A review of the existing curriculum is presently being undertaken in consultation with the private sector to create and establish relevant course outlines that would increase the competency skills of graduates.

Key areas of interest include:

- **English Competency**, particularly oral English skills is a key area of interest not only because it is a main consideration for the global BPO market, but equally important, it already is a huge competitive advantage for Filipinos that must nonetheless be protected if the country is to maintain, if not improve its position as a premier BPO investment destination.
- In coordination with industry associations, **industry certification programs** are being institutionalized to rationalize the competency of ICT workers and provide the industry players with a benchmark for its human resources. These benchmarks will further be utilized by TESDA to promulgate training regulations for providers of training programs and services.
- **Career advocacy programs** meant to educate parents, faculty, school administrations, and prospective ICT jobseekers on the requirements for an ICT career, and the potential for self-fulfillment offered by a career in ICT.

Philippine CyberServices Corridor

Launched in 2005, the Philippine CyberServices Corridor is an ICT belt stretching over 600 miles from Baguio City to Zamboanga designed to provide a variety of cyberservices at par with global standards.

Served by a \$10B high-bandwidth fiber backbone and digital network, it will support government's priorities for job creation, expansion of the middle class, and regional development.

Related programs include:

- **CyberServices Corridor Balanced Scorecard** – an assessment instrument and strategic planning process aimed at assisting LGUs in building their capacity to attract and to host cyberservices companies;
- **CyberServices Visitor’s Assistance Center** – a conveniently located one-stop shop to help facilitate the information and documentation needs of foreign visitors, both buyers and locators. Desks at the VAC will be allotted to representatives from the various industry associations, as well as to regional representatives from the various locations in the CyberServices Corridor.

Philippine CyberServices Branding

The Philippines is already a major player in the global ICT market, particularly in the area of cyberservices. This position needs to be strengthened and solidified into a Philippine brand that evokes quality, innovation and world-class sophistication, and that provides Philippine companies with an additional and immediate competitive edge. The current “low-cost, call center focused” brand image should evolve into the marketing of “premium quality, across-the-board business processing” .

This effort to create a strong Philippine brand will be carried out in partnership with private-sector association efforts to promote the Philippines as a whole, as well as support the efforts of Filipino companies to compete in the global market, and ensure a continuing partnership and commitment between the private and public sectors towards a common vision and plan for the Philippine ICT industry. Through the association, the government and the private sector can work together in areas such as:

- Creating an **Industry Portal** to provide a virtual business matching service;
- Data Collection that will provide accurate measurements of trade-in-services and workforce statistics;
- Research & Development that will help develop new niches where the country has a competitive advantage;
- Market development to collect market intelligence on country-specific rules and regulations affecting Cyberservices;
- Incentives monitoring to ensure competitiveness and a level playing field; and
- Common interests for a public-private sector legislative and policy agenda for ICT.

Strengthening SMEs through ICT Enablement

In order to generate demand for ICT products and services, the CICT aims to foster the widespread use and application of emerging ICT. More than half of all small to medium enterprises (SMEs) do not currently use ICT as a tool for increasing revenues and reducing costs.

The National SME Agenda prepared by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) calls for the “ICT enablement of small and medium-scale enterprises”. In order to make such efforts more meaningful, CICT has initiated the formation of sectoral ICT Blueprint Coordinating Councils. These councils formulate ICT strategies for their respective sectors, and assist in carrying out the following activities of the ICT Blueprint:

1. Awareness Building Seminars – one-day seminars aimed at building awareness of the benefits of applying ICT to business operations. Participants who attend these seminars will be given discount vouchers for the one-week Business Planning Workshops. (“Awareness Seminar” kits are made available for agencies and organizations who would like to conduct the one-day seminars on their own).
2. Business Planning Workshops – a five-day workshop which assists SMEs to:
 - Define their businesses more clearly and design a more competitive business strategy;
 - Determine the critical ICT, marketing and production capabilities to support their business strategy; and
 - Develop a cost/benefit analysis to support their planned investment in ICT capabilities.
3. Financing – The CICT has identified partner financial institutions which will provide funding for the ICT investment plans of SMEs that have developed a feasible cost/benefit analysis (produced in the business planning workshop).
4. Implementation Assistance – To ensure quality standards of independent software vendors and application solutions providers delivered to SMEs, CICT will establish a database and track record of vendors and suppliers which have been accredited by the sectoral ICT Blueprint Coordinating Councils.
5. SME Help Desk – To provide assistance for SMEs encountering problems with their ICT applications or hardware, the CICT with the assistance of the ICT Blueprint Coordinating Councils, will establish a telephone hotline which will assist SMEs in resolving their ICT-related problems.

LEGAL AND POLICY AGENDA
FOR THE PHILIPPINE ICT SECTOR

An enabling legal, policy and institutional environment to develop, promote and advance information and communications technology (ICT) is a prerequisite for the continued growth of the Philippine economy, the competitiveness of local industries and firms, and the achievement of national development goals.

Thus, the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010 outlines the Philippines' priorities for legal and regulatory reforms that are necessary to promote the country as a global knowledge player and ICT services provider.

- **Creating a Department for Information and Communications Technology (DICT)**

The creation of a DICT will ensure effective coordination and implementation of the national ICT agenda. The proposed DICT is envisioned to be the primary policy, planning, coordinating, implementing, and administrative entity of the executive branch of the government responsible for the promotion and development of the country's ICT industry.

Its creation is broadly supported by the private sector, which is keen to work closely with government to encourage ICT-related business and investment, enhance the skills of the country's workforce, pursue meaningful legal and regulatory reform, continue to enhance the nation's information infrastructure, and promote e-governance.

- **NTC Reorganization Bill**

The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), the country's telecommunications regulator must be transformed into a politically independent, fiscally autonomous regulatory body to insulate it from political and other outside pressures.

The NTC's role and mandate, particularly in an era of fast changing and converging technologies and services, needs to be clarified. Equally important, it must be given the powers and resources necessary to effectively regulate the whole ICT sector in a manner that promotes free and fair competition in the sector.

- **Convergence Bill/Revisiting RA 7925**

A review of the Public Telecommunications Policy Act of the Philippines (R.A. 7925) is long overdue. New laws and rules that are more in tune with the realities of convergence, new technological developments, new ways of doing

business, and the effects of these on universal access goals is necessary to further promote investment capital into the Philippine ICT sector.

- **E-Government Bill**

Government efforts to fully exploit the use of ICT as a tool to improve access to and delivery of government services must be supported by laws and policies on e-Governance.

A comprehensive e-Government bill will outline how the government would manage, procure and use information technologies to more efficiently deliver services, and institutionalize the e-Government Fund that would help to meet the requirements of major ICT projects of the government.

Some of the key policy issues that such a law will address include:

- Data sharing among government agencies
- Interoperability of government systems
- Data privacy in government
- Management of the e-Government Fund, including formalizing the systems and procedures in the management of the e-Government Fund, including the selection, approval and monitoring of projects.

- **Privacy and Data Protection Act**

As more government agencies adopt ICT and engage in electronic transactions, there is an increasing importance to ensure the protection and privacy of the personal data that is being collected by these agencies. Doing so will encourage more citizens to deal with government.

From the private sector side, a trustworthy legal environment that ensures privacy of data and other information will result in higher trust and confidence in the Philippine ICT environment especially considering this matter is a major consideration of business process outsourcing and call centers.

The importance of being able to assure the privacy and security of confidential data is also particularly important considering how the European Union's 1995 Directive on Data Protection could preclude Philippine companies from tapping into opportunities in the EU.

- **Cybercrime Bill**

The Philippines recognizes the importance of protecting and safeguarding the integrity of computer, computer systems, networks, and database, and the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information and data stored therein, from all forms of misuse, abuse, and illegal access.

A Cybercrime and Cyberfraud Prevention law would provide the legal basis for enforcing security measures and protecting the general public interest.

- **Freedom of Information Law**

A Freedom of Information Law will provide clear guidelines on: (1) public access to government data; (2) sharing and exchange of information among government agencies; and (3) the use of information obtained under such a law by the recipient government agency or private sector.