

## Reinventing the public sector landscape

It is said that no government can build credibility if it downplays the need to internalize efficient and effective mechanisms in steering the wheel of governance. Hence, it is the duty of government, public policy makers and other key stakeholders within the government landscape to stay focused on maximizing the gains of governance to the citizenry through transparency and efficiency in the governance process. This cannot be achieved if the machinery of government is fraught with bureaucratic bottlenecks and a wide communication gap between the citizenry and government which results in popular lack of confidence in extant institutions of government by the citizenry.

Notably, the prevailing economic recession in Nigeria is popularly attributed to corruption, inefficient governance practice and weak institutions; these vices thrive in systems where there are no hard set lines and enforcement mechanism for accountability in governance. Transparency International reports Nigeria's corruption index at 28%; this speaks volumes about the crying need for the Nigeria government to double down its efforts in ensuring the public sector operates a structured and accountable system that is able to detect and address any abuse in the system in real time.

In a bid to contextualize the efforts required for the Nigerian government to navigate towards better governance, the strategies for consideration are delineated in five key action points, as follows:

### Promoting transparency and accountability in government dealings

Having an informed citizenry is an important tool for good governance as it engenders government and citizenry cohesion; both parties are able to make input on policy matters and hold each other accountable for results. It therefore goes against the grain for government to conceal facts and figures meant for public

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consumption. For instance, budgetary information and appropriations made by the three tiers of government in implementing its fiscal blueprint should be easily accessible by all.

Another dynamics towards ensuring transparency in the public sector is to formulate and implement policies that encourage anonymous reporting of infractions of government regulations and guidelines.

It is interesting to note that the Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Finance, has internalized a whistleblowing mechanism to stimulate transparency and disclosure of infractions in government operations. Based on this new direction, it is hopeful that fraudulent schemes in government circles would likely hit the brick wall. It would certainly not be out of place for State and Local governments to follow in the footsteps of the Federal Government, by internalizing the same policy framework to mitigate the risk of fraud within their governance landscape.

### Building and sustaining trust and confidence in running the vehicles of government

According to John Maxwell, an American writer and teacher, "Trust is the foundation of leadership". It is therefore the responsibility of the top brass in government circles to build a reputation that would engender trust and confidence in governance. Mandatory accountability measures like routine declaration of assets, public projects and funds accountability, accountability for official property etc. will boost popular confidence in the governance system.

Foreign investors and private sector participation can only be stimulated on the bedrock of unwavering trust in the government's policy direction. Therefore, it goes without saying that government must act in good faith, without allowing

personal interest to tower above national interest while representing the public across all governance processes.

### Internalizing tight control mechanism in government processes and operations

It bears mentioning that if government ministries, departments and agencies are to function optimally and efficiently, watertight controls must be put in place for the governance process. The existence of a strong control environment will assist in mitigating the risk of fraud, corruption and breach of policies and procedures. Bearing that the financial records of government entities could be hygienically challenged, the concoction of fictitious records with legitimate transactions will be put at bay.

However, before controls are tightened up, a detailed assessment to spot loopholes in the entire ecosystem of government operations would be beneficial. This should be followed by the development of a strategic and accountable system for ongoing control and compliance monitoring.

### Deploying proven technology and innovative solutions

No government can be on the fore-front of innovative governance if its records are predominately on paper. Therefore, it becomes a giant leap towards running a tight ship if government's processes and procedures are automated with minimal paper work. For instance, maintaining government records on an application that is designed with stringent automated controls could certainly assist in mitigating the risk of error, fraud and irregularities.

From an internal audit perspective, it will not be ill-advised for the Internal Audit functions within government entities to have a robust internal audit application, which creates an efficient platform for uncovering fraud and breach of

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government policies and guidelines.

In addition, reporting infractions, that are spotted within government circles, via an electronic platform, software or app would result in an efficient information gathering system vis-à-vis handling multiple handwritten whistleblower reports.

### Training and capacity building

There is no gainsaying that certain inefficiencies within the public sector is partly attributable to knowledge gap. Therefore, government needs to place a high premium on building capacities in order to maximum the potential in human assets. If the manpower required to deliver on the mandates of government are not adequately equipped and trained, the performance metrics of government will be undermined by such knowledge gap. It is instructive to note that in view of global innovations, technological advancement and the widespread of enriching information, recycling obsolete approach for solving problems wouldn't give any government the competitive edge in the global community. Hence, training of employees and officials within government circles would play a fundamental role in transforming governance at all levels.

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