

1. INTRODUCTION

The Public Service Sector (*Note: in Singapore, public service comprises of the Civil Service, Singapore Armed Forces, Singapore Legal Service and Singapore Police Forces*) in Singapore has always been known for its efficiency and effectiveness. The public sector comprises of 14 ministries and 68 statutory boards (*Note: A statutory board is an autonomous government agency established through an Act of Parliament to carry out the statutory objectives specified by law*) (**Refer to Appendix 1 for the organizational structure of the government in Singapore**). As at 31 Dec 2000, the staff strength of the public sector stood at 119,316, with 63,316 in the ministries and 56,000 in the statutory boards

Despite the high number, the Singapore Public Service officers are still able to provide quality service in an efficient and effective manner. The World Competitiveness Yearbook 2001 produced by the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) has ranked Singapore the second most competitive economy in its Overall Competitiveness Index for 2001, and Singapore was ranked first in its Government Efficiency area. (**See Appendix 2 for the ranking of other countries**)

At the biennial Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPM) Conference in 1996, the Head of Singapore Civil Service, Mr Lim Siong Guan, PS (PMO) presented a paper on the various public sector reforms in Singapore. According to him, the characteristics of the public service in Singapore are as follows:

- Commitment to the value of meritocracy and freedom from corruption and nepotism;
- Fair and impartial in serving the public but not neutral about executing Government policy;
- Instincts of what are the national concerns and interests and good understanding of national imperatives;
- Judging effectiveness by results achieved with pragmatism and sense of urgency
- Continuous drive for efficiency in execution in a way which is responsive and economic

Although Singapore has gone through the phases from a developing nation to a developed nation, with increasing dependence on high technology, the characteristics described above by Mr Lim still hold very true today. Corruption, a dirty word to use, seldom finds its way to Singapore. In the recent study by the Political & Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC) found that Singapore is the least corrupt country in Asia, with a score of 0.83 whereby zero was the best grade possible and 10 the worst (**Refer Appendix 2 for the ranking of other Asia countries**).

The characteristic on "Continuous drive for efficiency in execution in a way which is responsive and economic" also continued to be emphasised on in the information technology Internet world. For example, the promotion of e-government and the setting up of the e-citizen are avenues for execution efficiency, with the only difference being the harnessing of technology.

However, according to Mr Lim, these characteristics are by no means immutable or guaranteed, they have to be continually worked at (quote, pp. 13 of the book (reference 1, page 85)). In the later part of this paper, there is a brief description on the reforms of the public administration of Singapore. It will give readers a very brief background on what have taken place prior to the launch of PS 21 (Please refer to NOTES on pages 55 – 61).

2. PUBLIC SERVICE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY - Overview

Adapted from PS21 website (www.gov.sg/ps21)

The 21st century for Singapore is mired with globalization, technology and higher living standard, which therefore warrants different expectations of the civil service compared to the past century. The society would be very dynamic and new ways of executing the same service would be enhanced by advances in technology. Civil service officers are expected to welcome change, anticipate change and to execute them, that is, to see change as opportunity rather as threat. Thus to prepare the Singapore Civil Service for the 21st century, the Civil Service has in May 1995, launched a programme known as the “PS21” – or Public Service for the 21st Century – to prepare the public service for the challenges it will face. PS21 is set up under the Public Service Division (**Refer to Appendix 3 to learn more about public service division**), which is in turn under the Prime Minister Office. PS21 is a movement about change – not change to a specific final state, but a mindset that change is necessary and needed at all times.

PS 21 is set up to serve two objectives:

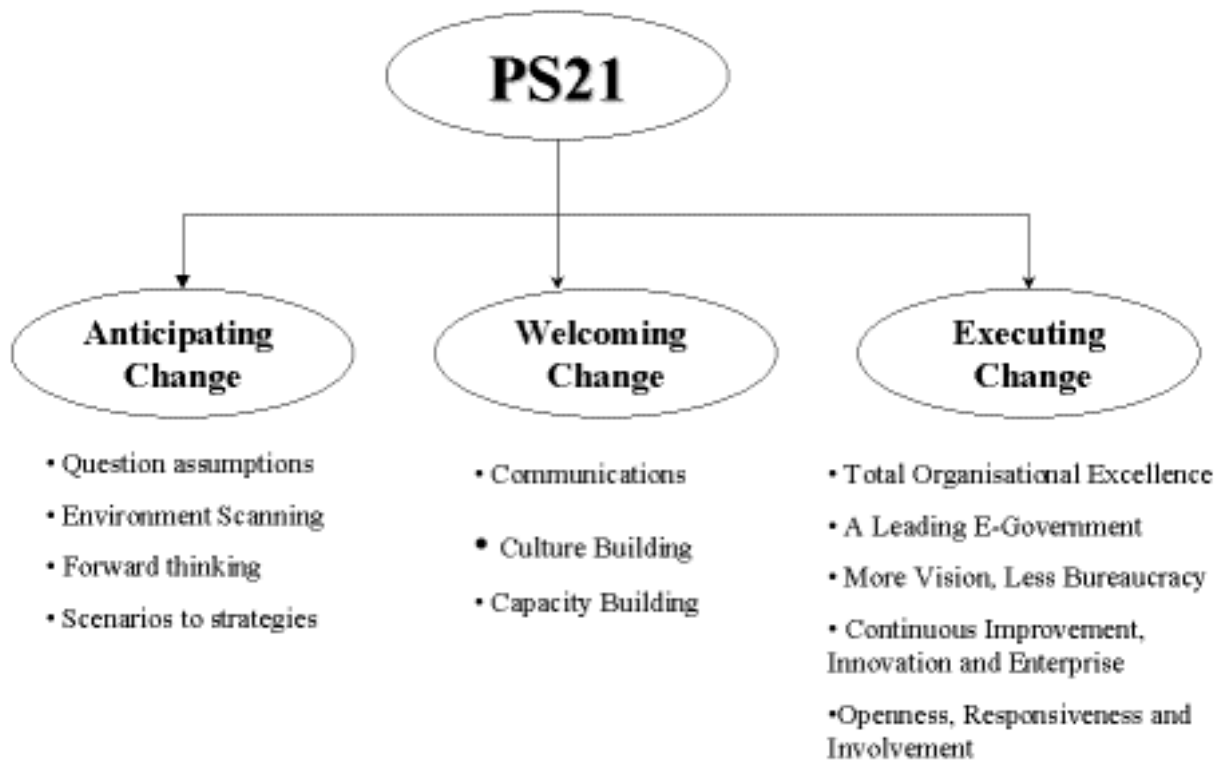
- i) To nurture an attitude of service excellence in meeting the needs of the public with high standards of quality, courtesy and responsiveness.
- ii) To foster an environment which induces and welcomes continuous change.

The second objective involves transforming mindsets and creating a different organizational culture and norms. The thrust in PS21 is to see change as a superior and necessary way of life, an instrument for improvement and advancement.

The 3 pillars that support the PS 21 movement are:

- 1) Anticipating Change (to prepare civil servants to deal with the future)
- 2) Welcoming Change (to welcome change as an opportunity to make progress and to improve)
- 3) Executing Change (to invite suggestions from staff and feedback from the public, to learn from mistakes and not let these mistakes pull down morale. Be proactive.)

Fig 1: The three pillars



These are the foundational pillars that will always be there regardless of the change in the structure and the execution of the PS 21 initiatives.

2.1 Structure and Approach

The structure of PS21 is organized combining both vertical and horizontal approach, that is, a two-fold approach. While the central structure is set up to promote, monitor and drive PS 21 forward, the second approach is that each ministry and statutory board set up its own PS21 committee, headed by the CEO. The second approach aims to raise the expectation of excellence.

PS21 is set up with the support and commitment of all Permanent Secretaries (or CEOs of Ministries) and senior officers. It covers the whole public service, and not just the civil service and government departments. The PS21 is organized using a two-fold approach:

First Approach : Set up central structures, monitor and drive PS21 forward

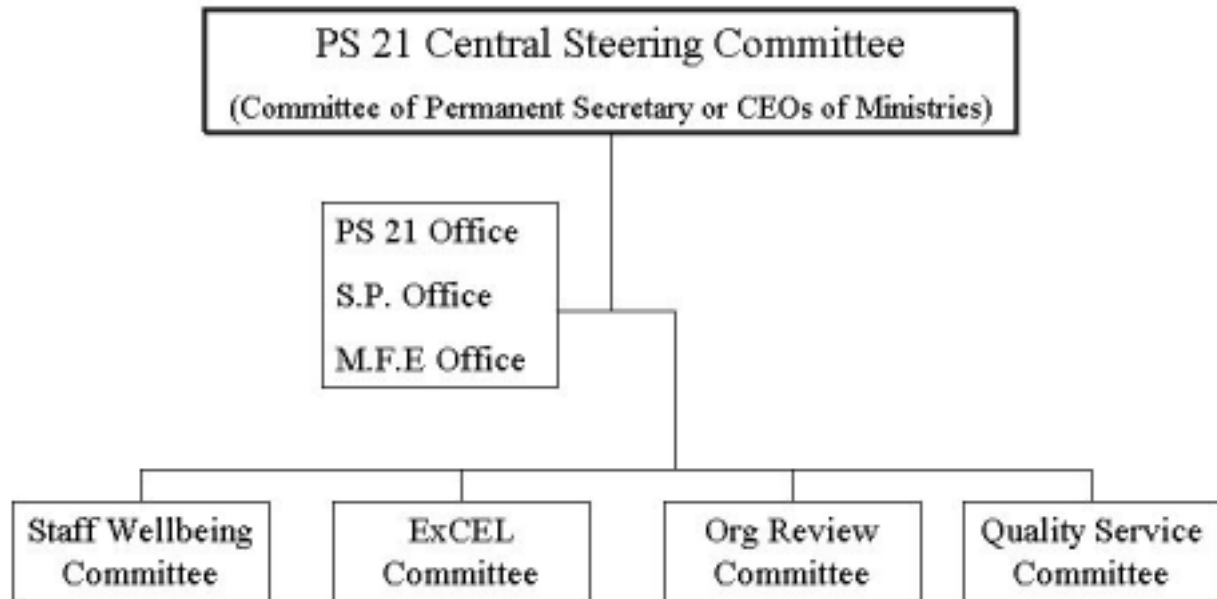
Second Approach : Each ministry set up its own PS21 Committee, headed by the CEO

1st Approach: Set up central structures to promote, monitor and drive PS 21 forward

The central structure is made up of the Central Steering Committee, as the overall control of the PS 21 movement. The Central Steering Committee is made up of Permanent Secretaries of the Ministries (Note: Since there are 14 ministries in Singapore, there will be 14 members in the Central Steering Committee). The person overall in charge of Permanent Secretaries is the Head of the Civil Service. (Note: currently, the Head of the Civil Service is Mr Lim Siong Guan) Under the Central Steering Committee, there are four functional steering committees namely the **Staff Wellbeing Committee**, the **ExCEL Committee**, the **Organizational Review Committee** and the **Quality Service Committee**. Each of the four functional steering committees is led by a Permanent Secretary, with representatives from all Ministries. To assist the Central Steering Committee, there is the also the **PS 21 Office**, the **S.P. Office** (Scenario Planning) and the **MFE Office** (Managing for Excellence)

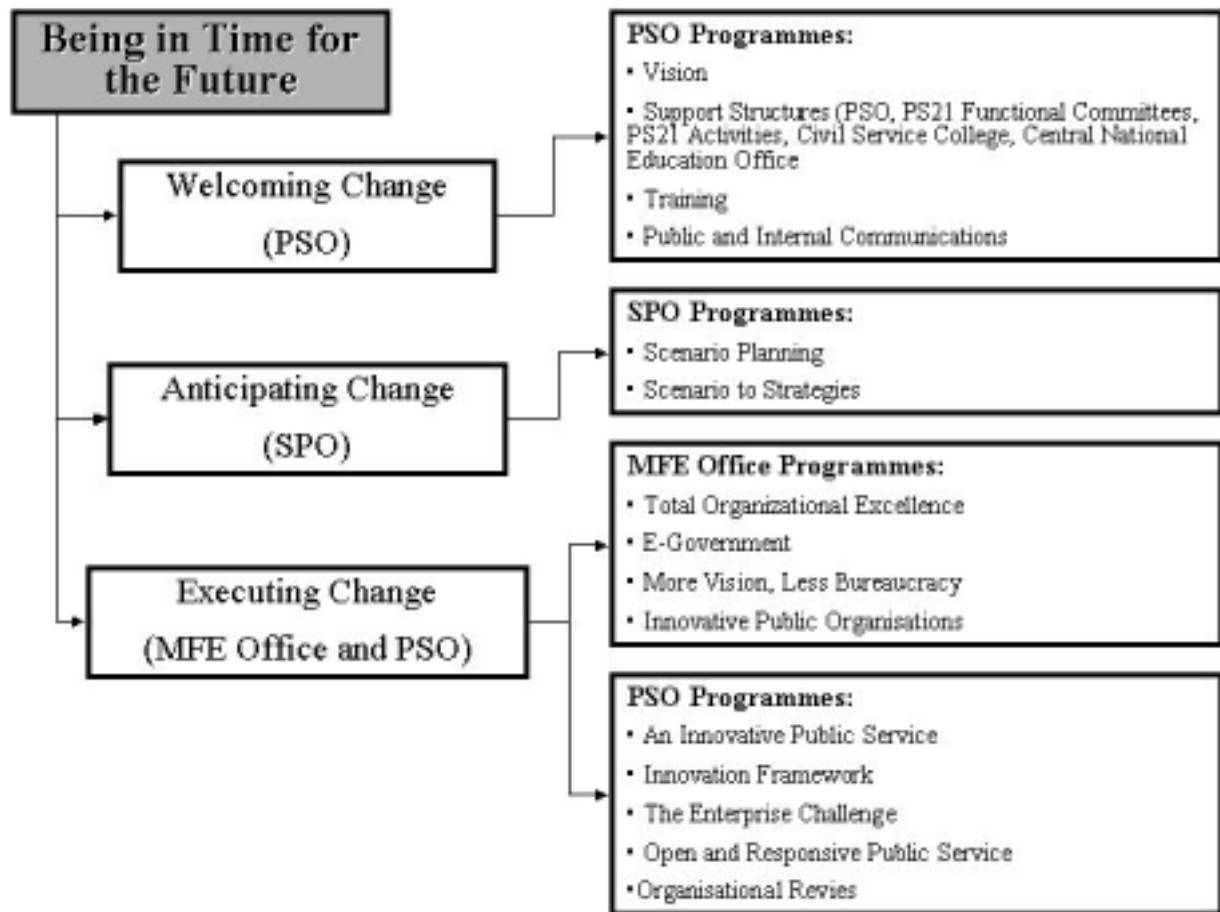
Figure 2 shows the bird's eye view of the PS 21 Organizational Structure and Figure 3 shows how the three offices work together to support the with the three foundational pillars of anticipating change, welcoming change and executing change.

Fig 2: PS21 Organizational Structure



Four functional steering committees, each led by a Permanent Secretary, with representatives from all Ministries

Fig 3: PS21 Framework



Functional Committee

All the representatives of the functional committees are “part-time” in the sense that they have their own portfolio of work to do as well. The PS21 Office does not coordinate their meetings. The individual committees schedule their meetings for the whole year and inform their members in advance. They usually meet once in 3 months.

i) Staff Well-Being Committee

Staff Well-Being refers to the physical, mental and emotional fitness of the public officers. It is believed that people build up their sense of self-worth and self-esteem when given responsibility and to do well in the task given. The purpose of this committee is to promote policies and programmes that provide for the well being of public officers.

ii) ExCEL Committee

ExCEL is the acronym for Excellence through Continuous Enterprise and Learning. The objective of this committee is to foster positive attitudes towards change and an environment that seeks continuous improvement. The committee wants to create this formal framework to generate ideas from bottom-up, instead of the usual top-down approach.

iii) Organizational Review Committee

Organizational Review is management-driven change to systems and procedures, and organizational directional. The purpose of this committee is to examine organizational structures and procedures for greater effectiveness and efficiency. It is believed that some strategic multi-agency change would not be possible at the individual level, and therefore must be undertaken at the management level.

iv) Quality Service Committee

The function of the Quality Service Committee is to promote quality service in meeting the needs of the public as well as internal customers. Public officers are expected to be **Courteous, Accessible, Responsible and Effective (CARE)**.

Summary of the Four Functional Committees:

Staff Well-being	Focus on the Individual
Quality Service	Focus on the Customer
ExCEL	Focus on Attitude Change and Situational Improvements
Organizational Review	Focus on Strategic Improvements

PS21 Office (PSO)

The PSO mission is to establish the Public Service as a fully internalized PS21 operation that sets the pace for other organizations in Singapore. It aims to achieve this with its strategy of "Catalyzing the Change" through the following actions:

1. Initiating and coordinating new service-wide policies and projects
2. Monitoring and publishing of results
3. Facilitating the sharing of ideas
4. Promoting relevant training
5. Publicity

(Note: The PS21 Office (PSO) originates as the Secretariat to the Service Improvement Unit under the Public Service Division (PSD). In 1995, PSO took on additional responsibilities with the introduction of the PS21 vision.)

Scenario Planning Office (SPO)

SP Office is under Public Service Division (Prime Minister Office). There are around 5 officers. The main function of this office is to help the public service anticipate change and identify driving forces for the future.

SPO helps to shape a forward-looking Civil Service that thinks critically about Singapore's future, questions assumptions and anticipates change. It does this by facilitating the development and dissemination of National Scenarios to highlight concerns, key challenges and opportunities for Singapore's long-term survival, security and success. SPO promotes and shares scenario planning instincts and tools with Ministries and Statutory Boards, and also provides project guidance and assistance to help them apply scenario thinking to organisation-specific concerns. Over time, it is hoped that senior officers in the Civil Service will be inculcated with the habit of constantly questioning assumptions and asking the "What if?" question.

Managing for Excellence (MFE) Office

The MFE Office is formed under the Ministry of Finance. The main function of this office is to help build an excellent Public Service through harnessing the creativity of the public officer and effective management of available resources. There are around 10 officers in this office.

The activities of MFE is carried out through four operating goals:

- i) People-Centered Management; ii) Systems-Oriented Approach;
- iii) Customer-Focussed Culture; iv) Network Government

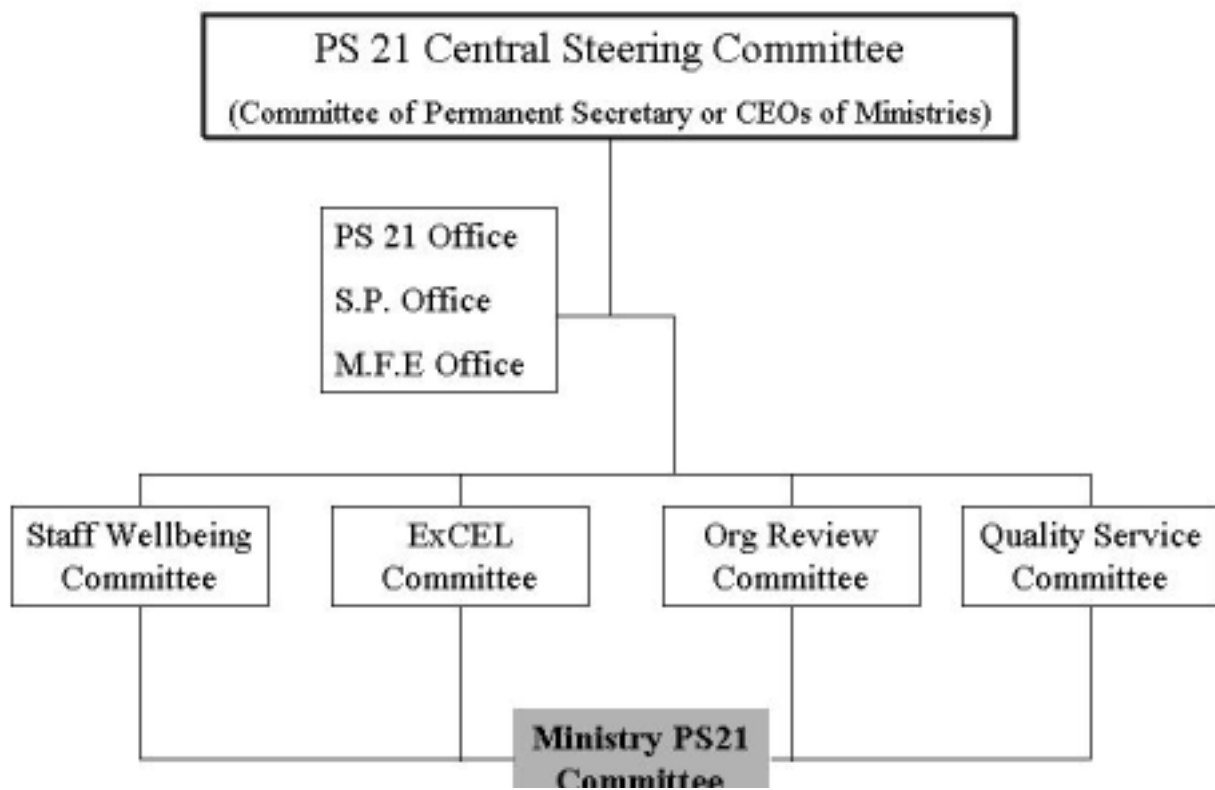
2nd Approach: Each ministry set up its own PS 21 Committee

Each ministry will set up its own Ministry PS21 Committee and each committee is headed by the respective Chief Executive Officer. Individual ministries, departments and statutory boards are responsible for its own PS21 initiatives in terms of working of proposals and managing of process. Ideas and Information developed thus developed will be shared through the Functional Committee. *(note: most ministries have their own PS21 committees. It is not compulsory for statutory boards to have one so it is up to them. Some of them do, such as the Central Provident Board (CPF))*

Each ministry will also replicate the four functional areas of the PS21, but the ministries are not limited to four functional committees. They can have as many as they want, as long as the four functional areas are covered.

Figure 4 shows that the chart of the PS21 Organizational Structure with the PS21 Committees of individual ministries included.

Fig 4: PS21 Organizational Structure



PS21 Committees within each individual Ministry, overseeing efforts internally.

Example: PS21 Framework for Ministry of Health

In the Ministry of Health (MOH), there is a Chief Activist who coordinates all the PS21 activities in MOH. All the Chief Activists of the Ministries will conduct regular meetings, with PS21 Office, and to share experience.

Instead of having a separate PS21 committee for the MOH, it is instilled as part of the agenda in the Permanent Secretary staff meeting, including permanent secretaries and senior officers. The elements of PS21 is thus instilled in the Permanent Secretaries meetings. Hence, the functional committee reports back to the permanent secretary.

The size of each of the functional PS21 committees in MOH varies. For Quality Service Committee, its members include the quality service managers of all the public healthcare institutions in Singapore. As for other functional committee such as the ExCEL, members are from the internal staff in the ministry and ranges from 7 - 8 members.

Restructured hospitals need not have the PS21 as they have already been restructured. Hence in a sense, they need not follow MOH. They can have their own system. *(The Government has since restructured all of them to be run as private companies wholly-owned by the government. This is to enable the restructured hospitals to have the management autonomy and flexibility to respond more promptly to the needs of the patients. In the process, commercial accounting systems have been introduced, providing a more accurate picture of the operating costs and instilling greater financial discipline and accountability. The restructured hospitals are different from the other private hospitals in that they receive an annual government subvention or subsidy for the provision of subsidized medical services to the patients. They are to be managed like not-for-profit organisations. The restructured hospitals are subject to broad policy guidance by the Government through the Ministry of Health).*

Significant Changes

The obvious change that has taken place in the Ministry is the change of the mindset. The management has changed from a top-down approach to a more balanced or in some cases, bottom-up approach. Hospital and health care public institutions are no longer thought of bureaucratic institutions in which rules and procedures reigned. Patients are now regarded as clients or customers as contrasted to the past, the use of such words were a taboo since it carried the notation of money minded.

Now, rules are made to serve customers better, and according to the Ministry of Health, it's customer is the whole Singapore population.

Importance of leadership

The Ministry has reiterated the importance of leadership. The leaders must first believe in the PS21 before they can convince others.

For example in the Ministry, feedback has to be replied within 3 working days. This norm was not set by the PS21 Office, but by the Quality Service Manager (QSM) of the Ministry. This shows that the QSM believed in service quality and took the initiative to improve customer service. The Permanent Secretaries would also be concerned if the Ministry took a long time to reply to a feedback. In November 2001, the Ministry managed to reply feedback within 2 days.

Hence once the top management practiced this 3-day reply feedback system, it becomes part of the culture of the organization and therefore, all the staff in the Ministry will follow the norm.

Continuous Education

The Ministry believed in inculcating the idea to the staff continuously. Training courses and seminars are often held for the staff to either improve their skills or to drive the idea of PS21. The training courses are also incorporated in the training map/ path of the officers.

For new staff, there will be a induction course to held every quarter. The concept of PS21 is introduced to the new staff and they will be taught on how to participate. The aim is to try to convince them that PS21 is good for them and how useful suggestions can change their working environment to be better.

An example of the WITs idea

Problem: Wasting the resources of nurses

Nurses have to rush to attend patients for every requests they made. However, sometimes, for patients who are not very sick or that the family members of the patients needed only simple request such as a glass of water. Hence it is very inefficient for nurses to drop down everything they are doing at that time to attend their request.

Suggestion: The installation of water dispenser a hospital ward of 6 beds.

Patients will be able to know where to get water and nurses can attend to more urgent matters in the hospitals.

It is important to recognize the importance of the four functional committees. The concept recognizes the importance of individual, teamwork and the organization as a whole. It is built around the idea of people, being able to accept change and to improve the working conditions for the benefit of themselves and to the public as well.

The next section that follows will elaborate in detail the four functional committees in a PS21 committee.

2.2 Specific Schemes under the Functional Committees

Adapted from PS21 website (www.gov.sg/ps21)

2.2.1 Staff Wellbeing Committee

Since the function of the Staff Well-Being centers around the public service staff, the committee will constantly look at ways to improve the physical, mental and emotional fitness of the public service officers.

One way to take care of the public officers' self-esteem is to ensure that the work they do matches their potential, and through competitive employment terms. In addition through constant appraisal, public officer whose performance is appraised positively will be promoted and be given more challenging task.

In essence, the Public Service looks beyond the officer's performance to assess and develop his potential in a conscious, deliberate manner. It is superior organizational performance through the practice of meritocracy.

2.2.2 ExCEL Committee

Excellence through Continuous Enterprise and Learning or in short, *ExCEL*, addresses the tendency of officers to expect direction to always come from the top by providing a formal framework for generating ideas bottom-up. **Work Improvement Teams** (WITs), the Public Service's version of Quality Circles, and **Staff Suggestions Schemes** are two such channels. These are complemented by a very strong emphasis on continuous learning to ensure staff will remain relevant and employable in the future.

The WITS programme is a very important tool and is the key characteristics of the PS21 movement. It has been very successful. A detailed analysis of the WITS programme is described in the Appendix 4 (**Refer to Appendix 4: WITS**).

Another recent initiative for ExCEL is the establishment of the **The Enterprise Challenge**. It is believed that there is a need to establish a mechanism in an organized way to reinforce innovation as a “natural way of life” in the Public Service Sector.

The launch of the Enterprise Challenge gives an “open platform” for individual public officers to come up with fundamental innovations or new creation that could result in significant gains in capabilities, efficiency and productivity in the delivery of public services. If it is a good idea, an independent panel of senior executives from within and outside the public sector will be called to decide whether and how much resource should be allocated to try out the innovation. Ideas are welcomed from the general public, the private sector and the people sector. Funding comes from the National Science and technology Board’s (NSTB) R&D fund. NSTB has put aside S\$10 million to start off the process. A co-funding principle is also adopted so as to ensure that the idea has the support of the relevant agency, and open the way for full implementation should the trial be successful.

WHAT IS TEC

The Enterprise Challenge (TEC) is a **new \$10m Fund** set up to provide funds and sponsorship for innovative proposals that have the potential to **create new value or significant improvements** to the delivery of **public service**. TEC provides sponsorship of funds and test beds for such **innovations that needs to be trial tested** so that its feasibility and practicality can be proven.

The purpose of TEC is to encourage creativity, innovation and enterprise among our people, to spark, develop and fund initiatives that can create new value for the Public Service and fundamentally improve the delivery of public service.

Besides providing trial funds, TEC will also identify and nurture some very promising innovative ideas to their fullest potential by providing facilitation resources, and funds for experimentation or trial testing.

This new injected dynamism would inevitably spread to other sectors of the society, lending to a more vibrant and enterprising Singapore.

Adapted from <http://www.gov.sg/tec/>

2.2.3 Organizational Review Committee

Organizational Review is management-driven change. Individual officers are powerless to introduce strategic multi-agency change, or to deal with procedural bottlenecks involving other work units. Therefore, supervisors must take the initiative to harness information technology, reduce red tape and seek step improvements. One key example of how system-wide structural change can be used to change mindsets is the devolution of personnel and financial powers to ministries through the concept of Autonomous Agencies.

Devolution of Personnel Management Authority

The Public Service Commission used to do all Civil Service appointments and promotions. The system lacked responsiveness on the part of the Commission and accountability on the part of the ministries.

From January 1995, authority in personnel management was devolved to

- A Special Personnel Board
- 6 Senior Personnel Boards
- 24 Personnel Boards

The Public Service Commission now does only

- Administrative Service appointments
- Topmost superscale promotions
- Appeals and discipline

The results of the devolution have been most welcome. Promotion exercises can now be held every year, and vacancies have been quickly filled with recruits chosen by the ministries themselves.

Autonomous Agencies

Starting April 1996

Ministries and departments are assigned operating budgets based on target outputs where outputs quantifiable and unit costs may be determined, or calculated according to projected GDP growth less a productivity dividend. For a start, development budgets are not included.

This is an important step in the further devolution of financial and personnel powers to ministries. It comes with the lifting of controls on personnel establishments. The concept is based on the idea that those closest to the customers can best optimize the use of resources for serving the public.

Success in the devolution of personnel and financial authorities requires that personnel and finance functions no longer be regarded as "backroom operations" but as important instruments by which Permanent Secretaries may set priorities for the world of their ministries, influence the pulse of operation, communicate target outputs, assess performance by quantity and quality, shape their organisations for the future, ensure strategic direction, build corporate values, develop key personnel, reward performance and motivate their people.

Adapted from: Paper presented by Mr Lim Siong Guan, PS (PMO) at the biennial Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPM) Conference held in Malta from April 21 – 24, 1996 THE NEW PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION GLOBAL CHALLENGE, LOCAL SOLUTIONS - THE SINGAPORE EXPERIENCE

line employees and focussing on quality and getting closer to customers. Every autonomous agency is required to specify its outputs and set performance targets as part of the annual budgeting process. These targets are monitored and form the basis for evaluating the performance of the agencies. By shifting and linking resource requirements and allocations to output levels the budgeting process is used as a driving force for greater employee empowerment and customer orientation. In return for greater flexibility, agencies become more accountable to the public as their outputs are publicized and assessed relative to the known targets. This way of managing public sector called 'budgeting by results' is similar to reforms implemented in countries such as New Zealand.

2.2.4 Quality Service Committee

One of the objectives of PS21 is to provide quality service, by putting the "public" back into the "Public Service". As expectations of the Public rise and Singapore's external environment changes, the Public Service will need to face the increasing challenges of fulfilling the needs of its customers. PS21 strives to look through the eyes of their customers, seeking not merely to satisfy adequately but to "delight customers" with the standard of public service.

The Quality Service Committee (QSC) oversees service improvement initiatives that will make services faster, better and more convenient for customers. This is done through harnessing information technology or simplifying some of the more convoluted procedures. The QSC recognizes, however, that quality service cannot be forced upon public officers, but will arise naturally when officers take pride in their work. The QSC encourages officers to be proud of the services they provide, and to commit to serving with CARE, that is, Courtesy, Accessibility, Responsiveness and Effectiveness.

PS21 Quality Service Committee Terms of Reference

1. To develop a holistic approach towards quality service, ensuring courtesy, accessibility, responsiveness and effectiveness in service delivery by the public sector.
2. To examine methods and monitor efforts to enhance the capacity for service excellence in the public sector through consulting customers, setting and monitoring service standards, benchmarking, and sharing of best practices.

Successful projects that have been undertaken by the Quality Service Committee is found in Appendix 5 (**Refer to Appendix 5: Examples of PS21 Quality Service Committee Projects**)

2.3 Specific Schemes under PS21 Office

PS21 Office initiates and facilitates change efforts across the public service towards the PS21 vision. With the mandate of the PS21 Central Steering Committee, chaired by the Head Civil Service, the PS21 Office works together with public organizations and the four PS21 functional committees (ExCEL, Staff Well-Being, Quality Service and Organizational Review Committees) to promote PS21 vision and values. Examples of projects undertaken are the e-Citizen initiative (*note: eCitizen is a one-stop integrated portal for government services designed with the citizens' needs in mind. One can look for information about the public services, making an enquiry or transacting with the government, in newly revamped portal that is organized intuitively into various categories and service packages which are multi-agencies and integrated*), Healthy Lifestyle Programme and Quality Service Perception surveys.

Regular sharing and learning avenues are done through PS21 forums and monthly publications such as the PS21 newsletter "Challenge" and the **PS21 Website** (www.gov.sg/ps21)

2.4 Specific Schemes under Scenario Planning Office

Scenario planning supports one of the three pillars of PS21 - that of anticipating change. The Scenario Planning Office promotes the use of scenario planning in 2 main ways:

1) To facilitate the development and dissemination of **National Scenarios** to highlight key challenges and opportunities facing Singapore in the future. By understanding the challenges ahead and thinking critically about Singapore's future, the Public Service is better able to ensure Singapore's continued survival, security and success in the 21st century.

2) To promote and share the principles and techniques of scenario planning with Ministries and Statutory Boards. The Scenario Planning Office also provides **project guidance and assistance**. By propagating scenario planning, the Scenario Planning Office seeks to inculcate in public officers the habit of constantly questioning assumptions and asking "What if?" questions.

But scenarios and strategies are of not much use to the Public Service if there is no co-ordinated vision. The action of one ministry or department can impact the work of another. A decentralized system provides for quicker responses and greater efficiency, but agencies can be at odds with one another even as they attempt to work towards co-ordinated action if there were no co-ordinated vision. The scenario planning exercise conducted by the Public Service and the subsequent *scenario to strategy* process by the various ministries have helped to reinforce the need for a co-ordinated vision.

2.5 Specific Schemes under Managing for Excellence (source: <http://www.mof.gov.sg/>)

The MFE Movement supports the third pillar of executing change. It aims to help the Public Service achieve excellence through harnessing the creativity of the people and effective management of the resources with these four operating frames of reference:

- People-Centered Management (to build a public service that develops people to their potential)
- Systems-Oriented Approach (to build a public service that fosters a “first-world” mentality in the people to explore new ways of seeing, thinking and doing things, and dare to be different)
- Customer-Focused Culture (to build a public service that provides quality services to customers in terms of courtesy, accessibility, responsiveness and effectiveness)
- Networked Government (to build a focused and connected Government in which public service agencies work together to achieve the overall strategic priorities of the Government)

Since the Managing for Excellence movement is an initiative under the Ministry of Finance (MOF). Therefore the MOF is the central ministry responsible for driving organizational excellence in the public sector, working in conjunction with the Public Service Division of the Prime Minister's Office.

The MFE framework identifies the focus areas to help public sector agencies achieve sustainable excellence. Lead agencies for each of the focus areas identify best practices and communicate them across the whole Public Service. MFE is not a one-off exercise but a continuous effort to improve systems and processes for sustained innovation and service quality.

Fig 5



The four programmes under the MFE Movement are

- i) Total Organizational Excellence,
- ii) e-Government,
- iii) More Vision Less Bureaucracy; and
- iv) Innovative Public Organizations.

2.5.1 Total Organizational Excellence

Organizational excellence is the key factor for translating public sector agencies' visions and strategies into effective outcomes. MFE has adopted the Singapore Quality Award (SQA) as the organizational excellence benchmark for the Singapore Public Service. This allows public sector agencies to be compared with the best organizations in both the public and private sectors, as the SQA is the national business excellence benchmark.

To facilitate implementation of the SQA framework in the public sector, a SQA guidebook was developed for the public sector, as well as SQA Online, an interactive self-assessment system for SQA aspirants.

Another excellence recognition award is the Managing for Excellence Scheme (MFE). The MFE Award Scheme recognizes public sector agencies that have attained specified national and international benchmarks for excellence, namely the ISO 9000 Certification, the People Developer Standard and the Singapore Quality Award/Class (SQA/SQC) (**Refer to Appendix 6: Excellence Recognition Awards** for more details). No organization can attain and retain such standards without superior commitment and motivation on the part of all their people. They deserve special recognition. Under this Scheme, agencies are given extra funds to spend on staff benefit and development on attaining any of the above national and international benchmarks.

2.5.2 e-Government *(adapted from www.mof.gov.sg)*

The Singapore Public Service faces the challenge of re-inventing government in the Digital Economy. This transformation of government and governance cuts across all aspects of the public sector from leadership, delivery of electronic public services, internal government operations, and ultimately economic competitiveness. It requires the establishment of an e-Government, one that recognizes the impact of infocomm technologies on governance in the Digital Economy and exploits these technologies in the workplace and in internal processes for the delivery of citizen-centric public services.

To realize Singapore's e-Government vision, an e-Government Action Plan was drawn up after wide consultation with all levels of public sector officers. It charts the strategic thrusts and programmes that guide the Public Service in realizing the e-Government vision, while retaining the flexibility to adapt to changing needs.

**e-Govt Action Plan*

The e-government Action Plan, launched in June 2000, presented five strategic thrusts for Singapore e-Government activities over the next three years.

Thrust I

Re-inventing Government in the Digital Economy

The public sector will systematically cultivate a better understanding of the impact of infocomm technologies to make meaningful decisions in all aspects of governance and to continually innovate to harness the benefits of infocomm technologies in its public services.

Thrust II

Delivering Integrated Electronic Service Delivery

Citizens will be able to access more and more public services, delivered online, anytime, anywhere. The public sector can provide the catalyst to create an e-based society in the digital economy by creating electronic services that are integrated and customer-centric. The **eCitizen** Centre launched in April 1999 is one such example. The Government will put more services on-line, in tandem with advances in IT.

Thrust III

Being Proactive and Responsive

The public sector will adopt a "sense and respond" approach to anticipating new trends. Systems and services must be delivered at "Internet speed" and continuously fine-tuned to respond to customer needs and feedback. The public sector will anticipate and set the trend, harnessing the power of infocomm technology to enhance policy delivery, simplify regulations and improve service levels.

Thrust IV

Using Infocomm Technologies to Build New Capabilities and Capacities

The public sector will go beyond using infocomm technologies as a system, but continually innovating and adapting business and operational processes to radically re-engineer and totally transform the way we do things. Infocomm technologies offer tremendous opportunities to create new value; to tap the power of collaborative knowledge management; and to provide instant knowledge and processing capability to make quantum leaps in service delivery.

Thrust V

Innovating with Infocomm Technologies

The public sector will go beyond tried and tested ways of deploying technology. It will experiment with new technologies, with a view to learning and developing capability. The procurement and project management approach must also be flexible or nimble enough to avoid deploying obsolete technology, and remain practical and pragmatic.

MOF has established an e-Government Office within the MFE Framework to oversee, coordinate and drive e-Government forward. The e-Government Office spearhead public service-wide ICT initiatives in partnership with the Government Chief Information Office (GCIO), Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) and all public sector agencies. It oversees the implementation of the e-Government Action Plan that charts the way forward to realize the e-Government vision. There are six strategic programmes under the Action Plan.

***Strategic Programmes**

Six programmes have been identified to drive the strategic thrusts in the e-Government Action Plan.

1) Knowledge-Based Workplace

Public servants at all levels must be infocomm literate and tap the power of infocomm technology to improve work processes, service delivery and teamwork;

2) Electronic Services Delivery

All public services that are suitable for electronic delivery or can tap electronic channels to improve service delivery should be re-engineered accordingly;

3) Technology Experimentation

To enhance the capability to adapt to rapidly changing infocomm trends and reduce the probability of committing large investments in the wrong decisions;

4) Operational Efficiency Improvement

Up-to-date hardware, work engines and data processing form the backbone of an efficient and effective public sector.

5) Adaptive and Robust Infocomm Infrastructure

The rapid convergence of telecommunications, broadcasting and information technology has opened up possibilities for a networked Government at a lower cost. A well-designed, reliable and scalable infrastructure is critical for supporting e-Government initiatives.

6) Infocomm Education

Infocomm education programmes will go beyond learning about systems and applications to harnessing infocomm technologies to improve work processes and service delivery.

It is worth mentioning that the e-Government initiative is not an overnight idea. The nation wide plan for computerization and Internet Technology has come in different phases, with the earliest one in 1980. The e-government is the fourth phases (**Refer to Appendix 7: Phases of e-government initiatives** for more details).

2.5.3 More Vision, Less Bureaucracy

The Public Service requires foresight to anticipate the future and agility to respond to the fast-changing environment. Speed is a key issue. However, bureaucracy can bog down fast policy implementation, stifle creativity and limit the level of productivity that can be achieved. There is a need to change the nature of rules to those that describe the policy objective and prescribe boundaries while keeping detailed decision rules to a minimum. This requires a clearer expression of mission and strategy, a higher degree of leadership to develop and communicate vision and a greater tolerance for variation in decisions and actions.

MFE Office is mounting a comprehensive effort revolving around the theme 'More Vision, Less Bureaucracy', where more vision requires excellence in strategic leadership, while less bureaucracy requires excellence in operational leadership. This theme is pursued by three different panels committed to cutting red tape: PEP (Pro-Enterprise Panel) responding to private sector feedback on bureaucracy, ZIP (Zero-In Process) responding to the general public and people sector feedback on bureaucracy, and POWER (Public Officers Working on Eliminating Red-tape) responding to internal feedback by public officers on where processes could be streamlined and rules minimized.

Fig 6



❖ **Pro-Enterprise Pane (PEP)**

PEP started in September 2000, a government initiative under the More Vision Less Bureaucracy movement to cut red tape and eliminated outdated rules. Since its inception, 141 pro-enterprise suggestions have been received from business, of which 62 (or 44%) have been accepted by the committee and 18 others are under evaluation. Public officers are encouraged to review existing rules and to improve on them based on the fast changing needs of the environment. The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) is also giving away S\$1,000 every month to the best pro-enterprise suggestion to cut red tape by a public sector officer.

❖ **Zero-In Process (ZIP)**

ZIP was established by the Public Service Division in October 2000. It was set up to make the Ministries of the government as one entity and to ensure that the different government agencies work together at the back-end and to deliver integrated and better services to the public.

ZIP aims to reduce the number of instances when the public has to go separately to various agencies for related services. It also seeks to identify and appoint the agencies responsible for various issues that impacts the public. A group of public officers (from various ministries) form the Zip secretariat, which proactively looks for ways to cut red tape and to keeps a vigilant watch for cases that falls under the following categories:

- cross-agencies issues that cannot be resolved;
- unresolved cases that are beyond the responsibility of any agency;
- recurring, unresolved cases that indicate the presence of a systemic problem;
- cases and issues that point to a need for policies review

Since its inception, ZIP has successfully made changes to a number of areas within the Public Service. For example, ZIP has introduced 9 lead agencies that took on the responsibility of coordinating the maintenance of various public grounds (e.g. drainage problem, cleanliness of public street and grass verge, and noise nuisance). With the introduction of these agencies, members of the public can now approach the lead agency directly for resolution instead of potentially being sent on a merry-go-round in search of the agency responsible.

An example of how the lead agency in action can be related to the issue of noise pollution. Previously various agencies were responsible for the issue. Ownership of the issue may be dependent on source, magnitude and locality. For example, members of the public should contact the police if the noise pollution is created by neighbors. However, if the noise is a result of vehicle traffic, then the Land Transport Authority (LTA) should be the agency responsible. If the noise pollution exceeds a certain level, then the Ministry of Environment (ENV) will take responsibility. Such segregation and distinction not only confuses the Public, it also frustrates them when being passed from one agency to another. With the appointed lead agencies, members of the public can now call ENV for all noise pollution issues and ENV will take the initiative to coordinate and direct the case to the right agencies.

❖ **Public Officers Working on Eliminating Red-tape (POWER)**

POWER is set up by the Ministry of Finance to allow public service officers a means of cutting red tape that they have spotted. POWER aims to cut red tape by getting rid of cumbersome and obsolete public sector rules, such as rules in the Government Instruction Manuals (IMS). The goal of POWER is to give public officers greater flexibility at the operational level by focussing on the principles behind the rules, rather than the rules themselves.

A POWER website has been set up by the Managing for Excellence Office to receive suggestions from public sector officers and channel them to the policy owner for consideration. The agencies have to revert with their responses within two weeks.

Since the launch of the POWER website in late November 2000, 90 suggestions have been received. One quarter of the suggestions have resulted in the amendments of rules, for example, one suggestion was to set up a website for all departments to post details of redundant stores so as to eliminate the need to physically circulate details of such redundant goods.

Public sector officers are also involved in the improvement of Government rules as part of a structured process called POWER Session. The idea behind POWER sessions is to get all public sector officers to discuss issues without worrying about rank or hierarchy; while rule owners need to act decisively on the proposed solutions. POWER sessions focus on the cutting of red tape within the Government, in particular Government Instruction Manuals (IMS).

Besides improving the working environment, organizational excellence also entails improving the skills of the public officers. All public officers are required to go through at least 100 hours of training per year. The area of training includes customer service, project management, communications, leading teams and so on. There is also a Leadership millstone programme for top-level management. To recognize individual superior performance, there is also the People Developer Award. The People Developer is Singapore's quality standard on human resource development. It is a three-year certification scheme that gives recognition to organizations that bring out the best in people for better business results. Launched in December 1997, the People Developer Standard offers organizations a systematic process to review their people practices, develop staff and improve training effectiveness.

2.5.4 Innovative Public Organizations (IPO)

A new order of innovation and enterprise is required among public sector officers to navigate the challenges of the New Economy. To promote an organizational culture that fosters innovation, one innovative initiative is the Enterprise Challenge (as mentioned earlier) to provide funds and sponsorship for innovative proposals that will add value to the delivery of public service.

Another initiative is the collaboration of MFE with the Economic Development Board, Productivity and Standards Board and Public Service Division to organize the Singapore Innovation Award. The award will motivate and reward innovative efforts of organizations both in the private and public sectors. More information on the Award criteria and application procedures can be found at the Award website: www.innovationsingapore.com

Besides the four programs, MFE also undertakes other activities such as building a networked government and engaging in sharing of good systems actively.

a) Communicating MFE

It is important that the public sector agencies share best practices, good systems, and effective processes, in order to enhance their capacity for sustained excellence. Various communication channels are used to achieve this such as the MFE website, PS21-MFE forums, MFE publications and articles in Challenge (PS21 newsletter).

b) Building a networked government

The common theme that undergirds the above programmes is the concept of a networked government. A networked government enables public sector agencies and officers to work together as a coherent and united entity to achieve common national outcomes. The more people are involved, the more creativity that can be harnessed from the talent in the public sector, and the more innovative and agile that can be expected from the Public Service.

In addition, MOF has launched a series of discussions amongst senior officials in the areas of Economic Development, Community Development, Security and Government Administration, to facilitate policy cooperation and coordination amongst ministries.

MOF has also formed inter-agency teams to undertake projects on a 'network basis'. These teams will be set up to study issues or problems with a view to producing practical solutions that can be quickly implemented. Such an approach will allow the public service to proceed with speed as well as tap on the diversity of knowledge and skills within the Public Service.

MOF's partnerships and networks will not be limited to Singapore. It is also establishing links with the counterparts in the US, UK and other countries as Singapore strives to put in place systems and processes that enable the public sector to spot opportunities and implement initiatives with speed.