Appendix 10 A
Report on Survey process and the discussion on the future of the Caribbean ICT Virtual Community

Survey
A survey of CIVIC was conducted during November of 2006.

The objectives of this survey were to
1. Document and analyse the demographics of CIVIC members
2. Document and analyse representation of CIVIC members as well as the type of organisation they represent
3. Obtain members' perceptions on the usefulness of CIVIC so far, and the characteristics to remain, and those to change
4. Identify the features of a suitable organisation structure including the following:
- Mechanisms for changing rules
- Mechanisms for collaboration for advocacy
- Means of accountability
– Means to enhance geographic and linguistic diversity

A survey working groug was convened. The working group consisted of Deirdre Williams, Hallam Hope, Mustafa Toure, Stephane Bruno, Yacine Khelladi and Valerie Gordon.

Enrique Piraces conducted the survey and announced the results in December of 2006
The report of the survey is on the CARISNET website at http://www.carisnet.org

Summary of the results (prepared by Stephane Bruno is) :-
20% of members have participated in the survey, that is 45 members on a total of about 225. In the summary, the consultant, Enrique Pireaces, says "In general, the results indicate that [respondents] have a positive attitude toward CIVIC. The majority of the respondents expressed interest in developing new ideas without abandoning the open structure of the organization."

He also found that there is a significant demand for an improved platform and for more linguistic diversity. For the moderation, participants are rather satisfied, although some times they believe there are conflict of interests.

Membership

Among the respondents, people working in Regional/national NGOs constitute the bulk of membership, with a stronger focus on civil society, government and education, less on private sector. There are also important Government people in the membership and a few interesting members working for donors and cooperation agencies.

The respondents are a rather mature constituency with an average of 47 years old, while the most common value is 59 years old. In general, they have relevant experience in participating in "online forums" or other online communities.

CIVIC Experience

60% of respondents consider themselves as passive or lurker members, while 33% consider themselves as proactive. This measurement is rather encouraging compared to the commom 90-9-1 rule of participation in online communities (see Jakob Nielsen's Participation Inequality at www.useit.com/alertbox/participation_inequality.html).

1

At least, 64% of respondents read CIVIC messages daily. One must say that the members that actually responded to the survey are, in fact, those that are at least passive, hence the bias in those answers.

Use of CIVIC

The most common answer about how useful is CIVIC is 38% of respondents use CIVIC frequently to develop ICT-related strategies and policies and 42% use it frequently to integrate a regional perspective in their work. I see here strong support for advocacy.

51% of respondents believe we should improve themes discussed. Language barriers and tools tie in second place with 36% of members each. Rules and charter-related issues concern 22% of respondents.

A clear majority of respondents believe CIVIC is useful for advocacy on regional and national policy making, regional exchange and collaboration.

It has been found that about 70% have little or no knowledge of official CIVIC thematics.

A group of volunteers consisting of Deirdre Williams, Roosevelt King, Hallam Hope, Valerie Gordon, Yacine Khelladi, Rafik Abdesselam, Stephane Bruno, Felipe Noguera, Mustafa Toure, Rudi Daniel and Valmikki Singh has convened to prepare an analysis of "What will be CIVIC"

The agenda for the discussion is to
1. Review survey results, and specifically the different member perspectives on civic mission, organization and mechanisms
2. Identify gaps and areas requiring improvement and /or redefinition
3. Review and reformulate as needed mission and objectives statement for CIVIC
4. Review the current organization model and mechanisms, the relative strengths and weaknesses (SWOT?) and discuss and propose changes to it to in order to effectively adapt to the reformulated mission and objectives, and increase efficiency
5. Identify appropriate performance indicators to facilitate future monitoring/ self evaluaton of CIVIC

There is a tension between those who are advocating for a formal organised structure with a legal registration, while others support the idea of having proactive working groups who collaborate on different issues and involve policy and decision makers in the organisation. There is agreement that the tools have to evolve from the dgroups platform to offer better multilingual capabilities, other collaboration type tools such as wikis and forums.

2

Working Group findings as at January 2007

INTERIM REPORT ON DISCUSSION OF "WHAT IS CIVIC"

January 2007

1. Definition of CIVIC, and proposed changes to it..

Most agreed with the substance of the defintion, and proposals were made to change some of the language to reflect the expanding nature of CIVIC.
These proposals include :-
-        including reference to non-Caribbean residents with an interest in ICT in the Caribbean
-        state that CIVIC is open to all of the languages, cultures and countries of the Caribbean
-        say that CIVIC is continuing rather than permanent
-        recognise that we are an online community should have some reach into the physical world

2. A proposal for a new definition is

"The Caribbean ICT Virtual Community (CIVIC) is a dynamic online community of Caribbean ICT stakeholders. The community is open to people who identify with all of the different languages, cultures and countries of the Caribbean. The community engages in sharing information, discussing issues, networking and linking actors, projects or initiatives on ICTs and development in the Caribbean. It also aims to contribute in the building of a common vision/perspective on ICTs, and to promote a Caribbean strategy and/or regional Caribbean-wide actions."

The gaps and areas in CIVIC's organisation which we need to bridge to help in

a) building a common vision/perspective on ICTs
-        building a structure which would allow self sustainability and funding
-        accepting multilingualism and to provide for it - eg rotating language groups, providing translation tools
-        increase awareness of CIVIC, rules, charter, etc
-        supporting technology (dynamic website, Wikis and other collaboration tools)
-        there needs to be clear leadership in moving forward on these issues

b) promoting a Caribbean strategy and relevant actions
-        absence of a strategy with which to move forward (as ROK states, to operationalise the last sentence of our definition), we could start working on this by asking individual members their ideas
-        rejuvenate the thematic groups, and identify others
-        need for a physical meeting from time to time, and with other groups to promote CIVIC

The question of the structure of CIVIC is very important. The above principles must be applied regardless of the structure which is adopted.

The three philosophies which have been espoused are :-

a) continue with the current structure and chart, which from the survey, many people seem to be comfortable with
b) a formal structure, with formal membership, elected representatives, secretariat and supporting structures to acquire funding, etc.

3

c) an organisation which has been described by Stephane, and reproduced here for convenience with some editing :
" Having permanent positions inside CIVIC occupied by various persons will help change the perception of having a "small group" of active participants and will help share the burden of animating the community. The council of co-ordinators of CIVIC permanent channels would body",
like a council, that would coordinate the work of various "coordinators" of CIVIC permanent "channels".

Stephane introduced a number of concepts :
- a "channel" is a permanent CIVIC Thematic (like Internet Governance, ICT Entrepreneurship, Policy and Regulation, etc.)
- each channel would have "Channel Coordinators" or "Facilitators", and working groups in these areas would fall under these facilitators.

Of course, each working group would have its own "moderator", usually the member that brought the interest on the table.
- a "moderator" is responsible of conducting a particular discussion to completion

The council would have representatives of the various linguistic groups (say three for French, English and Spanish...) and would have as main task to manage and execute the action plan for a year (or duration to be determined) elaborated by consensus by the members. "Channel coordinators" would carry the part of the action plan related to their area.

Now, for the purpose of representation inside other fora or advocacy groups, depending on the subject, a channel coordinnator would be naturally designated, or a member of the council, or an available resourceful member, in that order.

To fulfill the need for a permanent fixture - Stephane proposes that any CIVIC member could offer to put a secretariat at the service of the online setting. That role can be rotated yearly. This will help lower the overhead costs of running CIVIC.

Since we work in the ICT field, it is easy to map our secretariat services to the relevant organization and change the mapping yearly without the outside world even realizing it, except for the quality of work which will probably change from one organization to another.
Anyway, we can work on requirements (for example, multilingual requirements) for an organization to be eligible. In return, this organization can have exposure in CIVIC activities (for example, secretariat supported by XYZ.org in all communications, web site, etc.)

In short..
Option 1 - leave structure as is
Option 2 - Formalise structure as ROK and Felipe propose
Option 3 - Introduce a mechanism which Stephane proposes

DevNet has received approval to continue its mandate for another year in advocating CIVIC issues at the CARICOM ICT Steering Committee which will be convened in 2007. This model of participation from CIVIC is being advocated as a useful one.

4