TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CARICOM DIGITAL SKILLS TASK FORCE

(REVISED)

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1.   BACKGROUND

The need for digital skills has advanced during the COVID-19 pandemic and individuals, businesses, and governments are being forced to adapt to circumstances, to keep up with the new normal of the digital environment. We live in a world where technology is no longer an option but a necessity.

There is need to consider skills at all levels: the basic digital skills which support digital inclusion; the general digital skills that are increasingly needed for jobs in almost every sector and to get the most out of the digital economy; and the advanced digital skills required for the growing number of specialist digital roles and which portend the future of work activities.

For the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to be a viable player in the global digital economy, it is crucial that everyone has the digital skills he/she needs to fully participate in society.

The Caribbean Community has already begun to take steps to deal with the imperative of a changing skills landscape – some of these plans are encapsulated in the following approved strategies:

(i)   HRD 2030 Strategy; and

(ii) CARICOM Single ICT Space Roadmap and Work Plan

Other initiatives and programmes related to digital skills in CARICOM include:

(i)   Programmes being offered by CXC and the UWI and some national universities;

(ii) TVET Programmes being driven by CANTA Members;

(iii) Digital skills and literacy programmes offered by government entities and NGOs.

<u>Council Mandates</u>

The Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) and the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) – ICT have issued mandates, in May 2018 and November 2019, respectively, to help move the regional actions forward as follows:

At the Thirty-Fourth Meeting of the COHSOD – Education (May 2018),

THE COHSOD:

>*"**Agreed** to the establishment of a regional inter-sectoral Technical Working Group to develop a digital skills framework for the Region and to mobilise the collective of Governments, private sector organisations and civil society to work together to promote basic skills-building;*

>***Also committed** to exploring mechanisms greater collaboration with the COTED in addressing the HRD Strategy and the CARICOM Strategic Plan."*

At the Seventy-Ninth Special Meeting of the COTED – ICT (8 November 2019),

THE COTED-ICT:

>*"**Agreed** that a digital skills framework could be a significant input into identifying and defining the digital competencies and jobs needed by the region in the next decade;*

>***Mandated** the proposed COTED ICT Working Group on Digital skills to meet and –*

>*(a) agree on a working definition for digital skills for the Region;*

>*(b) document and review global examples of digital skills framework and digital skills coalitions to be presented to the COHSOD for their recommendations;*

>*(c) forward the recommendations to the COHSOD and the COTED (ICT);*

>***Requested** that the CARICOM Secretariat advance efforts for the Region to join the ITU/ILO Digital Skills for Jobs Campaign before the end of 2020."*

2. OBJECTIVES

To ensure that the Region is equipped with the requisite digital skills, the COHSOD, at its Twenty-Fifth Special Meeting held on 17 November 2020, determined that it was important to establish a taskforce – the CARICOM Digital Skills Task Force (C-DSTF). The Body will provide an opportunity for the Region to deliver a more collaborative, coordinated and innovative approach to meeting the digital skills challenge.

The primary objective of the C-DSTF is to advance digital skills in the region for economic and social development and provide technical guidance on the development of digital skills and capability levels across the skills spectrum in CARICOM. It is envisaged that the Taskforce will interrogate the digital skills gaps at all points, from the specialised high-level Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills, to the skills needed by all CARICOM citizens to live, work and participate in a digital economy and society.

At the Twenty-Fifth Special Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD), held on 17 November 2020, the COHSOD

Agreed to the establishment of a Digital Skills Task Force, for the period of one (1) year in the first instance. The main remit of the Task Force would be to:

(a)   review existing online course offerings which can be used by the Region to support the need for technical skills and certification;

(b)   identify specific institutions offering courses which can prove beneficial to CARICOM;

(c)   receive and review information from Member States and identify any best practices;

(d)   also identify, for adoption by the region, core (skills competencies) which can be pursued at the primary, secondary, university and workforce levels and later lead to certification, including that of the CVQ;

(e)   determine the elements of a Digital Skills Strategy for CARICOM;

(f)   develop a project proposal to support the roll-out of a Digital Skills programme beginning in 2022;

(g)   provide a report for consideration of the COHSOD and the COTED ICT by 30 September 2021;

Approved the Terms of Reference of the Digital Skills Task Force

Specifically, the C-DSTF will:

(i)   Serve as a coordination Body for the development of digital skills in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM);

(ii)   Review the report from the Single ICT Space Digital Skills Working Group, as per the mandate of the COHSOD, and other related reports;

(iii)   Access reports and other documents from countries, organisations / institutions and Regions, for the purpose of the development of a digital skills framework and strategy;

(iv)   Identify and document a coherent framework that enables persons and organisations to access good digital skills training opportunities that will enable providers (of these training opportunities) to collaborate, improve and innovate;

(v)   Prepare guidelines with evidentiary support for the production of a comprehensive Digital Education Strategy and/or a Digital Skills Strategy for CARICOM, to ensure the sustainability of the Region (SDG 4.4);

(vi)   Share experience, knowledge, networks and, where possible, resources to further the work of the Single ICT Space and Human Resource Development Strategy, in the area of digital skills;

(vii)   Prepare a project proposal to the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and other Development Partners, to support the roll-out of a CARICOM digital skills programme in 2022.

3.   ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities of the C-DSTF are as follows:

Co-Chairs:

Given the shared deliverable of this Task Force between ICT and Education, one Co-Chair will be an expert in the Education Field and one from ICT.

The Co-Chairs will be responsible for the proper conduct of meetings of the Task Force and for selecting and co-opting persons and institutions to support the work of the Task Force, as deemed necessary.

Members:

Members will be selected and invited based on the approval of the CARICOM Secretariat and represent a diverse range of competencies and experience.

The membership of the Task Force will include:

❖   Independent industry experts, regional organisations, gender experts, as deemed necessary, and co-opted as per the Work Plan of the Taskforce;

❖   *Representatives from:*

- The Single ICT Space Digital Skills Working Group (1);
- Three (3) CARICOM Member States, including one (1) from the OECS;
- The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB);
- The Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA);

- The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC);

- The CARICOM Youth Ambassador Programme (CYAP);

- The Caribbean Union of Teachers (CUT);

- The Universities of the West Indies (UWI) and Guyana (UG)

- The International Labour Organization (ILO);

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO);

- The International Telecommunications Union (ITU);

- The Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL);

- The CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ);

- The Caribbean Employers' Confederation (CEC); and

- The CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO).

Note:

(a) All effort will be made to ensure a gender balance in the Membership;

(b) If a member leaves their organisation or changes roles within it, a new member from that organisation may be sought to fill their place.

Secretariat:

The CARICOM Secretariat and OECS Commission will serve <u>jointly</u> as *"The Secretariat"*. The representatives on the Secretariat are anticipated to be technical officers in the areas of HRD/Education and ICT.

The Secretariat will manage the agenda, arrange meetings, and commission and quality-assure papers (including data collection).

4.   WORK OF THE TASK FORCE

The main remit of the C-DSTF will be to:

1. Develop a work plan which will include, but is not limited to –

(a) names of entities and experts to be co-opted to help the Task Force fulfil its mandates);

(b) determination of the Steering Committee (core members) of the Task Force and other working modalities, and identifying and establishing partnerships with private entities;

(c) consultations (virtual) envisaged;

(d) reviewing existing online course offerings which can be used by the Region to support the need for technical skills and certification;

(e) identifying specific institutions offering courses which can prove beneficial to CARICOM;

(f) receiving and reviewing information from Member States and identifying any best practices;

(g) identifying, for adoption by the Region, core (skills competencies) which can be pursued at the primary, secondary, university and workforce levels and later lead to certification, including that of the CVQ;

(h) determining the elements of a digital skills strategy for CARICOM;

2. Developing a project proposal to support the roll-out of a digital skills programme beginning in 2022;

3. Providing an (interim) report, including the Work Plan, for consideration of the COHSOD, COTED – ICT and any other relevant Bodies, by 30 November 2021; and

4. Completing the draft final report by/before 15 September 2022.

In the conduct of its work, the C-DSTF will be guided by the following questions:

(i) What is the current demand for digital skills across the CARICOM economy and what are the different types of digital skills requirements?

(ii) What barriers to the development of digital skills exist?

(iii)   How should digital skills be incorporated into the Education curriculum of learning institutions?

(iv)   How to quantify/identify the areas of shortage or mismatch[1] of digital skills in the workforce?

(v)   How are new digital demands - in priority sectors such as healthcare, tourism, transportation, and government - affecting workers' ability to function effectively in the current environment? What re-skilling or up-skilling interventions need to be provided to assist them?

(vi)   How do digital skill-building policies and programmes connect to the other "two legs of the stool" on digital inclusion, namely, broadband internet access and digital devices such as laptops and tablet computers?

5.   CONSULTATION

Aligned with the cross-cutting nature of digital technology issues, the C-DSTF will consult widely across business, academia, government, and non-government organisations.

6.   CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The C-DSTF will agree on an approach with the Secretariat for carrying out its role. It will specify the content and frequency of its reporting in alignment with deliverables specified in Section 4: Work of the Task Force. Given the timeframes for the development of the report, it is expected that the Task Force will meet frequently.

7.   REPORTING

The C-DSTF is to report its findings, together with recommendations to the COHSOD and COTED – ICT, no later than 30 August 2022.

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[1] Skill mismatch is defined as the gap between an individual's job skills and the demands of the job market

In order to ensure the COHSOD and COTED – ICT are kept appropriately informed as to progress, the Chair will provide one (1) interim report with updates on the Task Force's progress by <mark>30 November 2021</mark>.

The report(s) will focus on identifying issues that support a case for change and what plans and initiatives are needed. The report will also set out a direction for a detailed design of a digital skills strategy for CARICOM, with requisite timelines.

8. CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER EDUCATION AND ICT PRIORITIES

Various aspects of the Education and ICT systems are being worked on, reviewed or reformed in 2021; connections need to be made with these pieces of work as they progress. These include:

- CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy;
- CARICOM Single ICT Space Work Plan;
- COVID-19 Digital Transformation recommendations *(COTED – ICT, June 2020)*;
- CARICOM Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Policy; and
- ILO /ITU Digital Skills for Jobs

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

Whilst operating openly and transparently, the Task Force will ensure that information confidential to the group (including but not limited to Intellectual Property [below], confidential information, work product, strategies or tactics, or any other matter that a reasonable person would consider private) is kept confidential to its members.

10. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Any product of the Task Force, specifically, shall be considered public domain unless explicitly agreed otherwise. This does not include intellectual property created or owned by third parties, even when working with the group.

11. DISSOLUTION OF THE TASK FORCE

The Task Force will be dissolved upon completion of the deliverables, estimated at one (1) year after its first meeting. Reconvening the Task Force for programme oversight after one year will be done if the deliverables are not completed or as mandated by the COTED or COHSOD.