OLAJIDE OYEWOLE

ecitibiz

The Federal Ministry of Interior Affairs Immigration Automation and the New Frontiers

The e-Citibiz Platform

With the advancement in technology and the establishment of automated capabilities, services have become more efficient, expedient and functionalities have been significantly enhanced.

In 2013, in order to integrate its core services the Citezenship and Business (C&B) department of the Federal Ministry of Interior Affairs, Abuja (FMI), through a public private partnership with Anchor Dataware Solutions, established the e-Citibiz platform.

The e-Citibiz platform was designed to electronically capture all aspects of the work flow of the C&B department and solve the issues that may be identified as challenges to the department. Specifically, the portal was expected to provide online (E-form) applications for Naturalization, Business Permit and Expatriate Quota; process and structure information from stakeholders thereby reducing paper processes within the C&B department; provide an on-line payment system which would allow for transparent and accountable revenue collection and management; provide access to regulatory agencies such as the Nigeria Immigration Service, State Security Service, Corporate Affairs Commission, Federal Inland Revenue Service, Federal Ministry of Finance etc; and access to statistical reports of operations of the FMI.

In addition, the e-Citibiz platform was expected to establish a credible data base for the operations of the C&B department and eliminate sharp practices.

The establishment of the e-Citibiz platform over 5 years ago, demonstrates the vision of the FMI. Unfortunately, in 2018, applications for Naturalization, Business Permit and Expatriate Quota are still being processed manually at the FMI with attendance issues, including lack of transparency, typographical errors arising from human intervention, bureaucratic constraints and resultant delays, etc. With the delay in the implementation the e-Citibiz portal, its enormous potentials are not being harnessed and the opportunity to address the current challenges at the FMI, significantly improve the quality of its delivery and ease the process of obtaining approvals for Naturalization, Business Permit and Expatriate Quota would appear to have been lost.

Fortunately, the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) has been established to remove bureaucratic constraints to doing business in Nigeria. Its members include the heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) that directly impact on the business environment, such as the Honourable Minister of Interior. Several reforms that directly impact on business owners have been implemented by MDAs with the support of PEBEC including the processing of applications for corporate registration and e-stamping via the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) online portal, the integration of the Federal Inland Revenue Service e-payment solution with the CAC portal, etc. In view of the critical role of the FMI in the establishment of businesses in Nigeria, enhancing the quality of its service delivery by ensuring the full implementation of the e-Citibiz platform should be a top priority for FMI with the support of PEBEC.

As with all online or electronic platforms, the appropriate infrastructure must be established to guarantee the functionality of the portal. The FMI will also need to ensure that its staff at the C&B department are properly trained and integrated into the automation process. All things considered, the implementation of the online portal would be a major milestone for the FMI.