



FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

APRIL 1ST 2024 TO MARCH 31ST 2029

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FOREWORD

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Clayton Been

Chairman

TCI Telecommunications Commission

I am pleased on behalf of the Board to fully endorse these strategic objectives that aim to bring further success to the sector. In building upon the Commission's previous 3-year strategic plan, this new 5-year plan aims to set out the Commission's ambition for supporting consumers, businesses and the wider economy, and how the Commission aims to build upon the successful sector liberalisation we have seen since the Commission was formed.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL



Kenva Williams

Director General

TCI Telecommunications Commission

I am delighted to present the Commission's five-year strategic plan for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2029. The Commission is an independent regulatory body, established by the Telecommunications Ordinance, 2004 and is responsible for the regulation and licensing of all telecommunications service providers and radio spectrum in the TCI. We work with industry and consumers of services to deliver the best possible outcomes to our islands from telecommunications services and the use of radiocommunications spectrum.

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the Turks and Caicos Islands Telecommunications Commission's Five-Year Strategic Plan for the fiscal years 2024/25, 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29.

COMMISSION OVERVIEW

It is international best practice to establish an independent regulator for the telecommunications sector in recognition of its vital and growing importance both socially and economically. The Telecommunications Commission was therefore established as the independent regulatory body for telecommunications and spectrum in the TCI by the Telecommunications Ordinance, 2004 (the Ordinance).⁽¹⁾ Since then, the Commission has overseen the transformation of the sector from a monopoly to a competitive market during a period when there has been an explosion of new telecommunications services and capabilities.

⁽¹⁾The Telecommunications Ordinance <http://online.fliphtml5.com/fizd/bpkc/#p=1>

COMMISSION MANDATE

The Commission is responsible for the regulation and licensing of all the telecommunications service providers, and users of radio spectrum in the TCI. This includes fixed-line operators, mobile operators, broadcasting (other than content) and internet service providers.

Section 4 of the Ordinance specifies the roles and functions of the Commission. Those include:

- Advising the Minister on telecommunications;
- Regulating telecommunications per the policy guidelines published in the Gazette from time to time and by the principle of technological neutrality;
- Facilitating, maintaining and promoting effective and sustainable competition in telecommunications;
- Promoting the interests of consumers encouraging licensees to operate efficiently; and
- Prescribing standards for the quality of telecommunications services to be delivered to the public.

The Commission is also responsible for enforcing the Regulations established under the Ordinance. Those include universal service, interconnection, retail prices, spectrum licensing, and frequency management.

In exercising its functions, the Commission is guided by clear statements with respect to its vision and mission.

OUR VISION

All Turks and Caicos Islands citizens will have available – at a reasonable cost and without discrimination – rapid, efficient, national, and international telecommunication services.

OUR MISSION

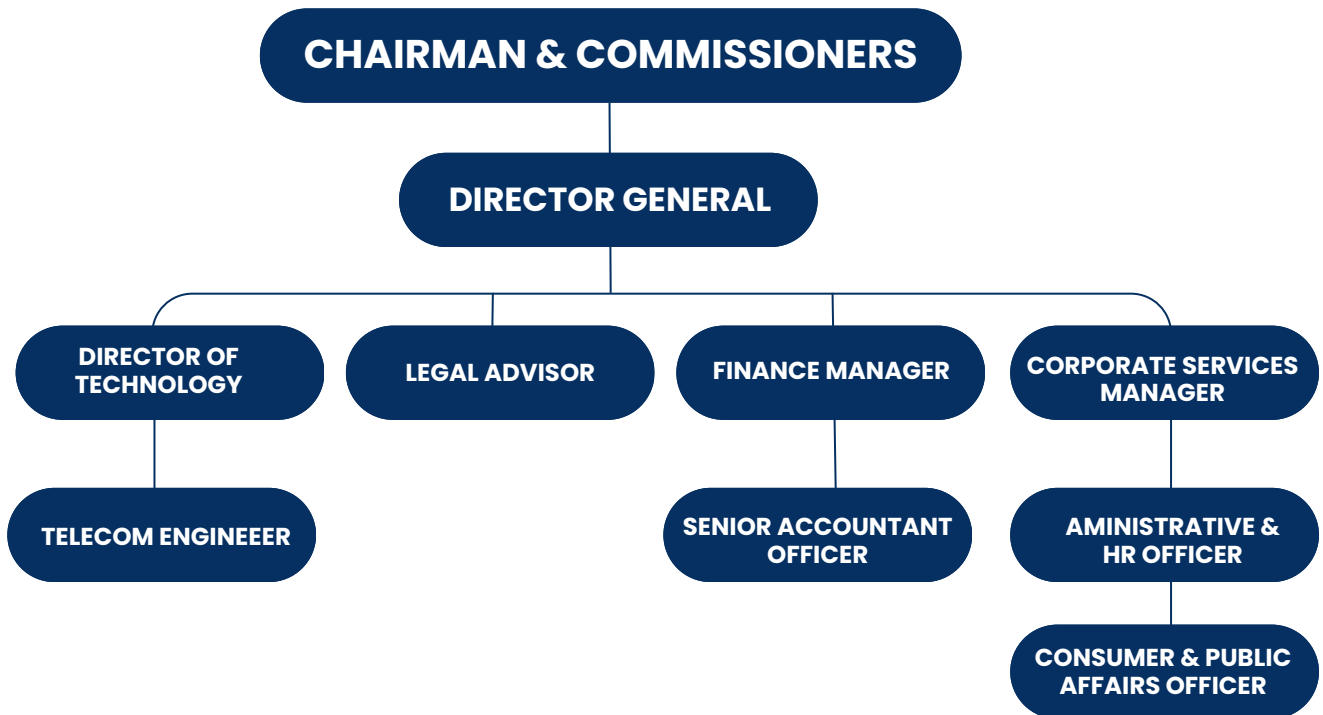
Our mission is to regulate the telecommunications sector in accordance with best practices and taking into account the requirements of an island jurisdiction. We aim to ensure that all users of telecommunications in the TCI have access to quality telecommunications services, at reasonable rates, in a fully competitive marketplace. We foster sector development so that it contributes to economic growth, including increased employment opportunities and revenue inflows and so that it can deliver the cutting edge and innovative services that lead to a vibrant telecommunication marketplace.



OUR ORGANISATION

The Commission consists of up to six board members, which includes a Chairman and a Permanent Secretary as an Ex-Officio member.

The Commission has nine staff members currently headed by the Director-General who also serves as Secretary to the Board.



EVOLUTION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATION STRATEGY IN THE TCI



LIBERALISATION

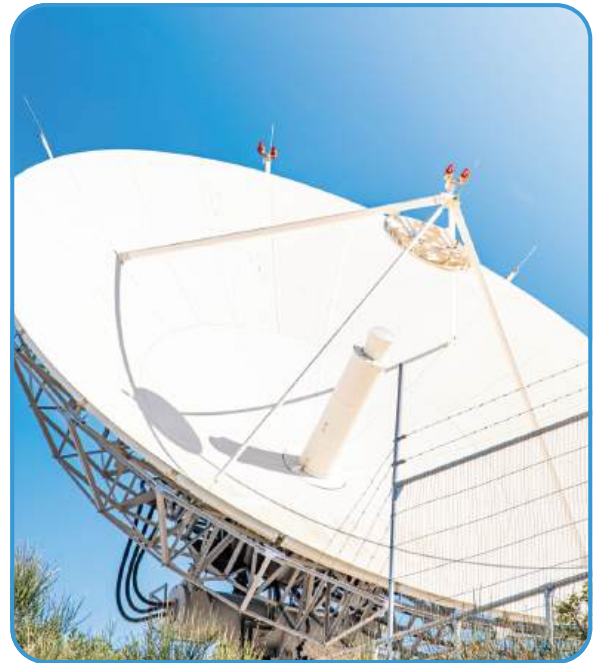
The liberalisation of telecommunications in the Turks and Caicos Islands was heralded by the establishment of the Telecommunications Commission in the Telecommunications Ordinance 2004. For the first time, an independent regulator had been created for the sector that was ready to take the Turks and Caicos Islands forward during a transformation to a competitive landscape and during the explosion in innovation that has transformed our world both socially and economically.

Cable & Wireless, rebranded to Flow in 2015, the long-standing incumbent, that was providing both fix and mobile services, for the first time faced competition. Newcomer Digicel entered the market in 2006 providing mobile services, which led to increased mobile penetration. While 2G services were initially deployed, 3G, 4G and LTE services were subsequently rolled out. Fixed internet services transitioned rapidly from copper to complete fibre networks offering download speeds in the 2020s that seemed like a futurist's dream only two decades earlier.

The question of whether more market entry should be permitted is being explored. The Commission will examine this feasibility, balancing the potential advantages with the dangers of unsustainable competition.

THE AIRWAVES

A key component of the industry's evolution has been the application of the electromagnetic spectrum to its most advantageous uses. The electromagnetic spectrum is a valuable public resource that, when combined with internet networks, allows all of humanity's knowledge to be accessible through smartphones in the palm of your hand. Regulation of spectrum is especially necessary when it is scarce. In order for our people and our economy to prosper, it must be used as efficiently as possible. The potential for fibre-like speeds and connectivity for all individuals and devices will be offered by 5G services in the upcoming years and potentially 6G services within ten years.



The Commission reviewed its spectrum plan recently. We will keep track of emerging technologies and spectrum bands in a spirit of openness and consultation with stakeholders about how they can be used to add the maximum value to our society and economy.

COMPETITION – NUMBER PORTABILITY AND 3RD PROVIDER MARKET ENTRY

Continuing our aim to intensify competition, we are introducing number portability. This enables users to take their phone numbers with them when they change providers, making it easier to switch between suppliers should they wish to do so. This will make providers compete more fiercely on quality and price to win and retain customers.

The Commission will also consider the possibility of enabling entry by an additional major network provider that could further intensify competition in the market.



CONNECTING OUR ISLANDS AND OUR PEOPLE

The Turks and Caicos have the ambitious goal of connecting the main populated islands from Providenciales (in the west) to Grand Turk (in the East) with a submarine fibre ring. This would enable all citizens on those islands to reap the benefits of lightning-quick fibre internet connectivity and exceptional voice service quality.

RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF NATURE

Natural disasters are an ongoing reality for our people. Because our islands lie in the Atlantic hurricane belt, hurricanes are a seasonal risk. Much more rarely, but still significantly, seismic activity can also affect the islands due to their location near the boundary between the Caribbean and North American tectonic plates. Tsunamis are also a possibility.



After the 2017 hurricanes Irma and Maria, the Commission delivered a Telecommunications Emergency Preparedness and Response Policy (TEPRP) in conjunction with the industry and government. In conjunction with this, our two most prominent providers, Digicel and Flow, developed an Emergency Preparedness Agreement (EPA) to mitigate the risk of network failures in future emergencies. The EPA enables the shared use of network facilities during emergencies. Altogether the TEPRP and the EPA have made us more resilient as a society. In so doing, we can reduce the risk to life and the damage to our economy from future storms and other emergencies.

QUALITY MATTERS

Customers want services that deliver an excellent user experience. An internet service that stops and starts excessively does not meet expectations. This can happen due to capacity issues in the case of fibre or both capacity and coverage issues in the case of wireless services. We want customers to know what they can expect from providers. We also want providers to communicate what customers can expect in a way that customers can understand and can rely on. Network performance can vary during the course of the day depending on traffic and location, and customer equipment can also be a factor.

We therefore intend to explore the issue of quality service in the near future.

REGULATIONS AND LICENCE REVIEW

The original regulatory framework was established in 2004 and 2005. Although changes have been made to the Telecommunications Ordinance over time, key regulations such as those dealing with licensing, spectrum and universal service, remain in their 2005 formats. Given the rapid developments in the sector in the following 19 years since that time, the Commission intends to revisit these instruments as well as the licences that have been issued to ensure harmonisation and international best practice and that they are suited to the modern world in terms of price, quality, choice and innovation provision.

BROADCASTING

The Commission will work with the Minister to consider future spectrum assignments for broadcasting purposes. However, we report on the provision of Pay-TV services since this is a significant segment of the communications sector overall in the TCI. Digicel and Flow all provide television services using various technologies.



CYBER SECURITY & DATA PROTECTION

The world is increasingly online for social and economic interactions, making it an increasingly large target for criminals, hackers, trolls, phishing, terrorism, and warfare. If key infrastructure is disrupted, the damage can be significant and potentially catastrophic. Moreover, it can occur very rapidly, much faster than in the physical world, meaning that excellent detection mechanisms and a very quick response may be necessary depending on the nature of the threat.



The Commission will explore what role it might usefully serve in protecting consumers and businesses and their data from attack and/or compromise without overlapping, duplicating, or confusing areas that are the responsibility of law enforcement. For example, the Commission believes that industry guidance might be helpful. This could be limited to telecommunications or extended to other sectors. The Commission will explore this in consultation and discussion with other stakeholders, both public and private.

UNIVERSAL SERVICE

As a part of its review of the Universal Service Regulations, the Commission will consider whether particular providers should be designated as universal service providers and consider the obligations that should be imposed on them. This will be informed by an appropriate analysis of the existing coverage and quality of experience delivered to users across our islands. We aim to use this analysis to determine if there is a better model for the implementation of a USF.



INTERNET GOVERNANCE

The government is considering taking control of the top-level domain name, “.tc,” for Turks and Caicos for Internet numbers. The Commission will facilitate this process as required. Control of the domain will ensure its appropriate use and offer revenue opportunities for our islands.

The Commission also intends to explore the role that it could and should play in Internet governance. The Caribbean Telecommunications Union’s (CTU) Caribbean Internet Governance Forum (CIGF) is an important regional forum for governance. Attendance at the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is also a possibility.

The themes for the December 2024 IGF are:

- Harnessing innovation and balancing risks in the digital space
- Enhancing the digital contribution to peace, development, and sustainability
- Advancing human rights and inclusion in the digital age
- Improving digital governance for the Internet we want

GLOBAL & REGIONAL STRATEGIC CONTEXT



The Commission has regional and international responsibilities as well as responsibility for the TCI. In particular, with respect to numbering, internet addressing and spectrum allocation.

Relevant numbering bodies are the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA), and the ITU.

Relevant internet governance and addressing bodies are:

- Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) and its Caribbean Internet Governance Forum (CIGF)
- Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
- Internet Governance Forum (IGF)
- Internet Society (ISOC)
- Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)
- Regional Internet Registry for the Caribbean and North America (ARIN)
- Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE)

The ITU is also responsible for coordinating and updating the Radio Regulations which determine what spectrum can be allocated for what purposes and under what terms worldwide.

MARKET DESCRIPTION

The Telecommunications sector in the TCI was liberalised following the enactment of the Telecommunications Ordinance in 2004, which opened the market to competition and established the regulatory framework. Subsequently, competitive entry has occurred in virtually every segment of the sector, which has resulted in the market steadily growing over time.

Using the latest full-year data, total telecommunications industry revenues increased by 6.5% from \$61 million in FY2021 to \$65 million in FY2022 due to population expansion and infrastructure improvements supporting better customer services.

The Commission has issued multiple spectrum licences for radio and mobile services, with the two largest telecom network licensees (Digicel and Flow) active in providing both fixed and mobile public voice and data services. In FY 2022, the total number of mobile subscribers grew by 3.3K or 6.2% from the previous fiscal year 2021, which had a subscriber base of 53.1K.



The increase in mobile subscribers in 2022 can be attributed to growth in the TCI population and carriers offering new affordable service plans. Mobile penetration also saw an increase over the same time, by roughly 3.1 %.

Fixed-line telephone services also grew by 8K (7.6%) subscribers between FY2021 to FY2022. Although fixed-line subscriptions are on a decline in the Caribbean region and elsewhere this increase in the TCI can be, because the penetration rate for the same period saw a 0.6% decline, attributed to population growth and a booming economy - resulting in more businesses opening and more hotels, condos, villas, apartments, and homes being built.

Across Turks and Caicos fixed broadband service providers continue to improve the speed of fixed broadband by transitioning to fiber. Growth in fixed broadband subscriptions increased by 7.5% from 13.3K in FY2021 to

14.3K in FY2022, although broadband subscription penetration decreased slightly by 2.3% compared to FY2021.

The Commission does not licence or regulate broadcast, subscription, or Pay-TV television services; however, because these services are usually bundled with telecommunication services and use elements of telecommunications to distribute content to end users, the Commission monitors and reports on the sectors' activities.

There are currently two television service providers in TCI, namely Digicel and Flow, using various technologies including fixed wireless and/or fibre [1], who saw Pay-TV subscriptions growth of 78.7% and penetration growth of 26.9% between FY2021 and FY2022.

⁽²⁾No account is taken of subscriptions in TCI to out-of-market satellite pay-tv services.



PREVIOUS STRATEGIC PLAN

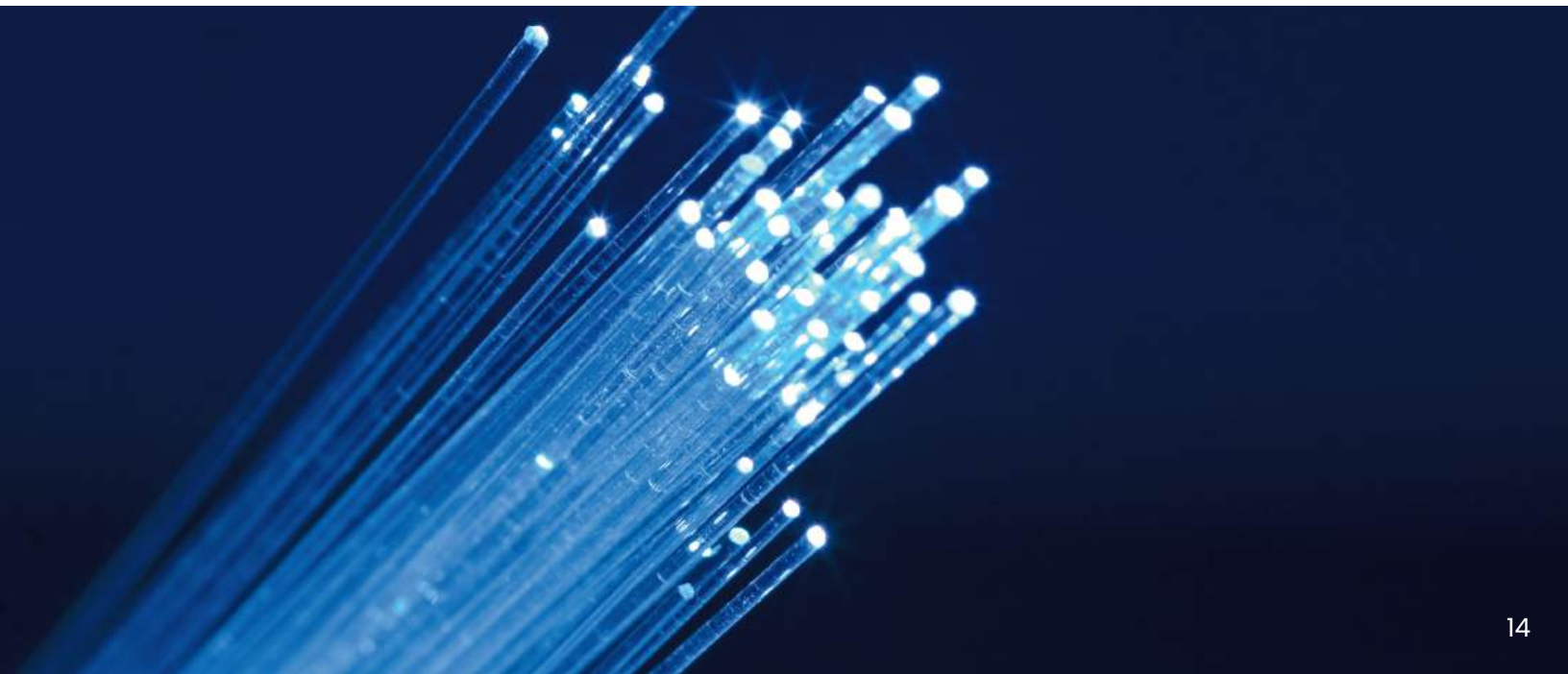
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Commission's previous strategic plans have been 3-year forward-looking strategic plans. These strategic plans have seen key achievements by the Commission such as, after the 2017 hurricanes Irma and Maria, the development of the Telecommunications Emergency Preparedness and Response Policy (TEPRP) to provide a secure policy framework for an Emergency Preparedness Agreement (EPA) between Digicel and Flow to be signed in November 2022 to mitigate the risk of network failures in future emergencies.

The Commission has also, through its strategic planning, been able to develop its competition agenda in the Telecoms sector through its Number Portability consultation and cost-benefit analysis. Initiatives that have supported the Commission in being able to bring forward, in this new 5-year strategic plan, the development, implementation and go-live of a Number Portability service in TCI, to benefit both consumers and businesses.

CHALLENGES

The strategic challenges encountered by the Commission are, like those encountered by other smaller regulators, the requirement for a small regulatory team to manage both the faster pace of change across technology and consumer behaviour and the fact that the telecom sector is dominated by licence holders with a wider footprint and experience than the TCI.

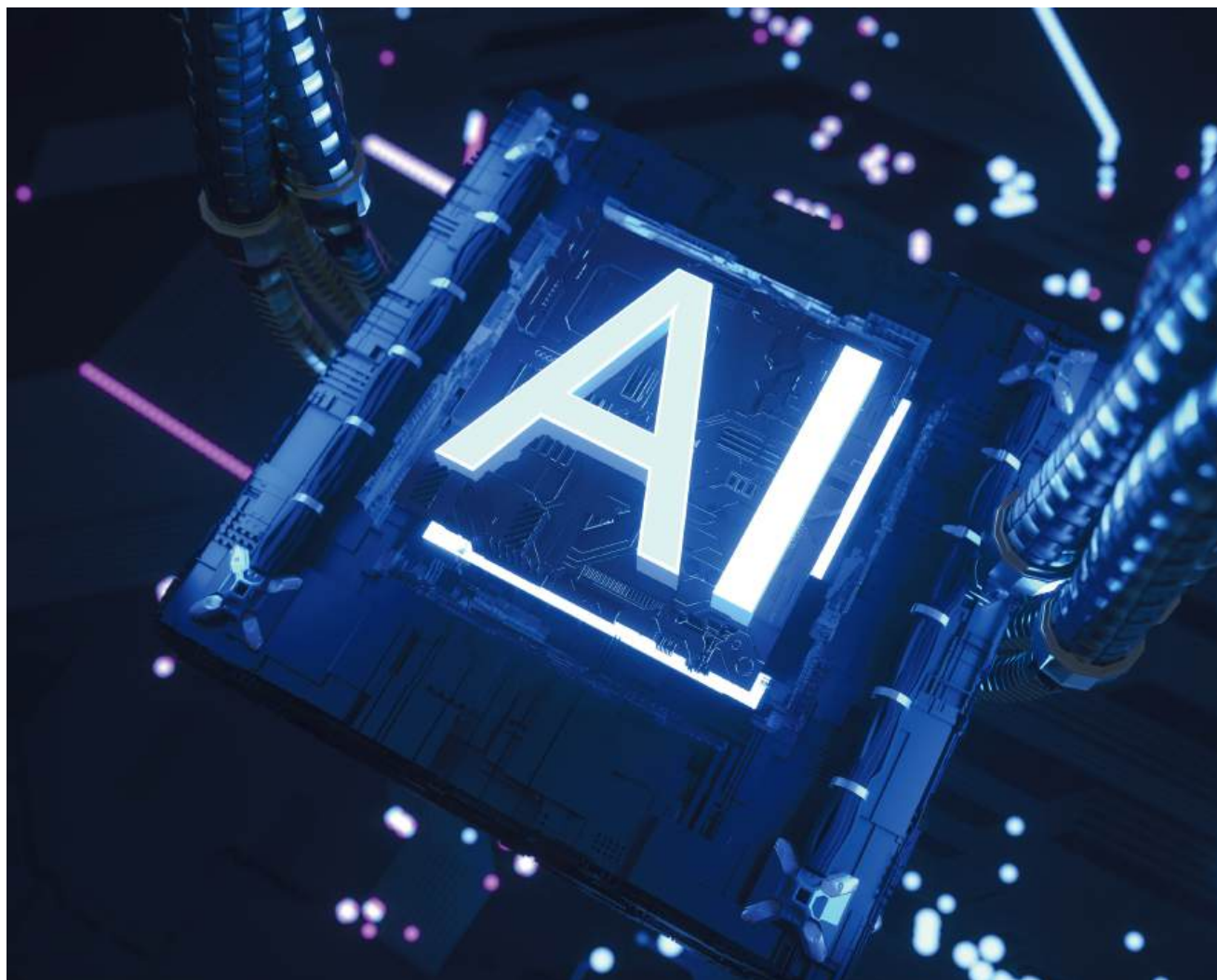


EMERGING ISSUES

The challenge of the faster pace of technological and consumer behavioural change means that issues such as Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) have been included in this new 5-year strategic plan.

For Cybersecurity, because it is a current live issue, this means the Commission will be considering and planning for it at the start of this new 5-year plan, whereas for AI because it is an emerging technology, the Commission will look to better understand potential detriments so it can determine its regulatory stance.

For both these and other similar emerging issues the Commission's continued interaction with regional and international bodies such as CARICOM, CTU and the ITU will be crucial to its ability to inform, develop and execute its strategic plans.



RISK ANALYSIS & MITIGATION

The Commission recognises that several risks can harm or reduce the effectiveness of telecommunications in the islands. We have taken steps to address those risks in our Strategic Planning.

Infrastructure Vulnerability from Natural Disasters: As already mentioned, the islands are prone to hurricanes and, less frequently, tsunamis or earthquakes, which can severely impact telecom infrastructure. Hence the TEPRP and EPA mentioned previously.

Monopoly Risks: With only two main service providers, there is a greater risk of monopolistic practices affecting prices, value, and service availability. The Commission is reviewing this matter and will explore the possibility of a third major player entering the market.

Regulatory Capture: The risk that regulatory decisions might disproportionately benefit a particular stakeholder or stakeholders due to close relationships or political influence. The Commission maintains a professional stance, and train staff to work cooperatively but objectively with the stakeholders with whom it engages. We also ensure that we consult with the full range of stakeholders and provide reasons for our decisions.

Cybersecurity: Increased vulnerability to cyber threats due to possibly outdated or insufficiently robust systems. The Commission is considering its role here, including providing useful advice to the industry.

Digital Innovation & Pace of Change: Change is a constant in the type, provision and use of digital services. The Commission will ensure it is aware of these changes and their potential impact on both consumers and businesses and the services and licensees the Commission regulates.

Legal and Compliance Risks: The Commission ensures compliance with international standards and treaties, such as ITU Regulations, which might influence domestic policymaking. It reviews these standards and updates its regulations accordingly.



FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

2024/25 to 2028/29

The Commission’s Five-Year Strategic Plan covers ongoing and planned activity from 2024/25 to 2028/29. The plan groups the Commission’s planned strategic activities in themed groups.

Activity	Status	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMPETITION						
Number portability Phase 2	Phase 1 is complete and preparatory work has started on planning for Phase 2. The Commission has awarded a Phase 2 services consultancy contract to support the development, implementation and go-live of the service.	Development and implementation.	Development and implementation.	Number portability expected to start.	Ongoing monitoring and publication of statistics.	Ongoing monitoring and publication of statistics.
Quality of Service Regulation	This initiative has been deferred until the Number Portability (NP) project is completed, to incorporate changes that need to be included in regulation. Then consult on and implement guidance or regulations with respect to ensuring quality of service for users.	Awaiting the completion of number portability.	Awaiting the completion of number portability.	Awaiting the completion of number portability.		

Activity	Status	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Complaints and Disputes	The Commission will continue to monitor and resolve complaints and disputes raised and publish information about them.	Monitoring, resolution and publication in Annual Report.	Monitoring, resolution and publication in Annual Report.	Monitoring, resolution and publication in Annual Report.	Monitoring, resolution and publication in Annual Report.	Monitoring, resolution and publication in Annual Report.
Market Monitoring	We will continue to collect sector statistics for analysis and publish them in the Annual Report.	Collect and analyse statistics and publish them in Annual Report.	Collect and analyse statistics and publish them in Annual Report.	Collect and analyse statistics and publish them in Annual Report.	Collect and analyse statistics and publish them in Annual Report.	Collect and analyse statistics and publish them in Annual Report.
CONNECTIVITY & COMPETITION						
National Fibre Ring, Landing Stations, Office Building & Associated IXP	<p>The Fibre project has now awarded consultancy services to develop a TCI Domestic Submarine Cable Strategic Outline Business Case. Activity is continuing. The submarine fibre will depend on the construction of a Telecommunications (Multisector) Building and Landing Stations. The submarine fibre cable will be extended on land as necessary so that it can be brought into the building within which it will enable traffic exchange via an Internet Exchange Point (IXP). The IXP will enhance national connectivity and enable the local exchange of data traffic.</p>	<p>Domestic Submarine Cable Strategic Outline Business Case completion.</p> <p>Government to decide whether to proceed with the project on a subsidised basis if there is no case that ensures full cost recovery.</p>	<p>Assuming project go-ahead - confirmation of submarine cable landing sites and the site for a telecoms building that will also house the IXP.</p> <p>Commence work on laying submarine fibre, landing stations and telecom building.</p>	<p>Continued build of the submarine cable, associated landing stations, telecoms building and IXP. Creation of industry workshop to draft IXP exchange agreement. Purchase of equipment for landing stations, ingress to telecom building and IXP. Creation of documentation including contractual documentation, pricing and processes for selling capacity on submarine cable and for landing station access.</p>	<p>Completion of build of submarine cable, associated landing stations, telecom building and IXP. Installation of associated equipment. Commencement of submarine cable, landing stations and IXP operations.</p>	
Maritime Ship Radio Licensing (MSRL)	This matter is still ongoing and pending the finalisation of the Marine hydrographic plan for TCI. Currently, licensing of ship radios is being performed by the Maritime Department.	<p>The Commission has drafted an MOU for Maritime, which will continue licensing maritime ships on the Commission's behalf.</p> <p>Finalisation of MOU thereafter.</p>				

Activity	Status	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Universal Service	The Commission is considering how to fund Universal Service going forward and after a review of the existing regulations.	Commission drafts consultation on funding approach.	Commission consultation on funding methodology. Determination and start of new funding approach by the beginning of the next financial year.			
OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS						
Telecommunications (Multisector) Building including Commission Office	See National Fibre Ring, Landing Stations Office Building & Associated IXP Plan.	See National Fibre Ring, Landing Stations Office Building & Associated IXP Plan.	See National Fibre Ring, Landing Stations Office Building & Associated IXP Plan.	See National Fibre Ring, Landing Stations Office Building & Associated IXP Plan.	See National Fibre Ring, Landing Stations Office Building & Associated IXP Plan.	See National Fibre Ring, Landing Stations Office Building & Associated IXP Plan.
Spectrum Monitoring and Management System	<p>Aeronautical and the type approval aspects of the system are complete.</p> <p>EMF units have been installed on the populated islands.</p> <p>Objective to enable monitoring of all cell sectors over time.</p>	Expansion to additional cell sectors.	Finalise coverage of all cell sectors.	Ongoing management.	Ongoing management.	Ongoing management.
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES & IMPLEMENTATION						
Telecommunications and Broadcasting Ordinance (Repeal & Replace) with ICT Ordinance	Existing telecoms and broadcasting ordinance will be repealed and replaced by new ICT Ordinance covering telecoms, broadcasting and, possibly, data protection, A.I., broadcasting content and other content and measures to protect telecommunication operators from big tech platform exploitation.	Drafting new ICT policy paper to be used for new ICT Ordinance.	Consult on new ICT Policy. Determination on new ICT Policy. Draft New ICT Ordinance. Consult on new ICT Ordinance. Determination on new ICT Ordinance. Finalise drafting of new ICT Ordinance following consultation. Possible interim short form Ordinance relevant to big tech.	Draft suitable new regulations under new ICT Ordinance. Consult on new regulations under ICT Ordinance. Determination on new regulations. Finalise drafting new regulations following consultation.	Implement new ICT Ordinance and regulations and repeal existing telecom and broadcasting ordinance and associated regulations as well as any big tech interim Ordinance.	

Activity	Status	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
SCARCE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT						
TCI Top Level Domain Name - ".tc"	The Ministry of Home Affairs has been tasked with taking the lead, due to the complex legal nature of this project. As a result, all related documents have been forwarded to the Ministry, and feedback is still pending on the progress being made to resolve this issue.	Assist the Ministry on request. The domain is managed by a foreign company currently. The Government and the Commission are considering gaining control. Management will be resolved between the Commission and the Ministry.				
Capacity Demand of Next Generation Services (eg. Extended Reality, AI, etc.)	The Commission will monitor developments with respect to these technologies on users and industry keeping under review best practice both across the Caribbean and internationally.	Ongoing.	Ongoing.	Ongoing.	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
NATIONAL/PUBLIC SECURITY & CONNECTIVITY						
Cyber Security	Consideration of Commission's role in promoting cyber resilience against domestic and international threats and making the public aware of them and measures that can be taken to mitigate the risk.	Discussions with Ministries and law enforcement about best role, if any, for the Commission.	Draft and consult on guidance for relevant industry sectors and the public.	Publish guidance.		
Internet Governance	Consideration about the extent to which and in which fora the Commission should promote the views of the islands with respect to internet governance.	Attend December 2024 Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Saudi Arabia to assess usefulness for the Turks and Caicos. Attend CTU Internet Governance fora. Possible lobbying areas and areas of interest at the IGF: assistance in capacity building for cyber security and IXP establishment; making a submarine network resilient to natural disasters and breakages; policies that support economic development; financial and technical assistance.	Develop policy with respect to involvement in internet governance. Ongoing lobbying and using the fora for capacity building and aiding development in the TCI.	Ongoing lobbying and using the fora for capacity building and aiding development in the TCI.	Ongoing lobbying and using the fora for capacity building and aiding development in the TCI.	Ongoing lobbying and using the fora for capacity building and aiding development in the TCI.

Activity	Status	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
AI Usage by Entities Regulated by the Telecommunications Commission	AI use in customer care management, customer data processing, enabling innovation for service and network management including the radio interface via sandboxes, offshore storage of data for AI purposes and wider AI use.					

MONITORING & EVALUATION



MONITORING

The Commission reviews its strategy plan annually and is open to considering suggestions from stakeholders at any time. All suggestions and the Commission's responses to them are published. This ensures transparency for industry and the public and facilitates full and proper public debate.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of strategic plans takes place on an ongoing basis and in particular when plans are reviewed. The evaluation process considers whether objectives have been achieved and how alternative approaches might, in retrospect, have enabled the achievement of the objectives more rapidly and at a lower cost. These learnings are then built into how the Commission undertakes its planning going forward.



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