

Press release:

GCC governments stress on availing instant access to m-government services to the general public

ICDL calls for awareness on online collaboration technologies

Dubai, UAE (1st of June 2013) – As Internet becomes increasingly social allowing instant access to shared information, governments across the Gulf region have put a premium on strengthening efforts to tap into web-enabled technologies to engage the public. With regional e-Government service delivery on the rise, ICDL GCC Foundation, an organisation that promotes digital skills and cyber safety for-all across the GCC, believes there is a greater need now for developing skills within the governments to address the intricacies of online collaboration technology.



Most recently, HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President, Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai, launched a nationwide “Mobile Government” initiative and ordered all government organisations to provide people living in the UAE with public services from anywhere, around the clock, in two years through mobile phones and other smart devices. HH said the plan is part of a nationwide initiative to bring e-Government to the next level leveraging

the country's impressive infrastructure and mobile penetration rate – one of the highest in the world with 14 million mobile phone subscribers, or an average of two devices per person.

Building on the past successful implementation by the Dubai Government of HH's decree, issued in 2005, requiring all national Dubai government employees and educators to complete the ICDL certification by July 2007, ICDL is developing its own Online Collaboration module to be integrated with the already acquired skills by government employees and educators with new essential skills in the area of online collaboration.

Jamil Ezzo, Director General of ICDL GCC Foundation, announced that the new ICDL Online Collaboration module will be released in Q4 of 2013 and be made as a stand-alone certification or part of its current seven modules. "The module reflects the evolving technology trends that affect the region, especially since Internet and mobile technology have become instrumental in providing innovative e-Government strategies that promote transparency and efficient delivery of services to people and businesses," he said.

The ICDL Online Collaboration module will address the growing need to support m-Government initiatives in the region as it will set out concepts and skills relating to the use of online collaborative tools such as resource-sharing, storage, cloud computing, productivity applications, calendars, social media, web meetings, learning environments and mobile technology.

According to the United Nations (UN) e-Government Survey 2012, UAE ranks the 8th among global emerging leaders in e-Government development. Other GCC countries in the Top 25 list Bahrain (16th) and Saudi (21st). The UN lauded these countries' commitment in expanding "infrastructure and human skills on which to build further advances in service delivery and employ the full potential of information technologies for long-term sustainable development". Some nations, such as the UAE, have tapped mobile technology to bridge the digital divide.

Ezzo said they expect skills to be sought in this part of the world where the IT infrastructure market is likely to cross the US\$3.9-billion (AED14.3-billion) mark by the end of 2013 and

revenues from cloud servers alone could reach around US\$1.54 billion (AED5.7 billion) by 2013 and US\$1.7 billion (AED6.25 billion) by 2013, as per Gartner's estimates.

The market research firm also predicts Middle East government IT spending this year to hit a total of US\$17.7 billion (AED65 billion), up by 2.3 per cent from 2012, fuelled largely by investments in the telecommunications sector. A modern telecom infrastructure will be crucial in the Gulf countries' e-Government push as it will focus attention on electronically linking up several government agencies and offering a single interface for citizens to connect with these state departments, according to Gartner.

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The International Computer Driving License (ICDL) is a global computer literacy initiative developed to provide knowledge about Information Technology (IT) and enhance competence of using personal computers and common computer applications for all the citizens of the world. The ICDL GCC Foundation is the sole body to implement and disseminate the program across the GCC States and Iraq with the support of leading educational institutions and accredited bodies. The Foundation mission is to enable proficient use of Information and Communications Technology that empowers individuals, organizations and society, through the development, promotion and delivery of quality certification programmes around the world.

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