

Interagency Collaboration for Single Window Implementation: Thailand's Experience

National Single Window (THAINSW) is a successful interagency collaboration. It is a national flagship project set up to enhance trade facilitation in Thailand with a vision of becoming the world-class logistics hub for Indochina. It is in accordance with the Agreement to Establish and Implement the ASEAN Single Window and builds support for the formation in 2015 of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

High-level Architecture of THAINSW

THAINSW has six major components:

Component 1: National router, providing a standardized and regulated environment for the seamless and streamlined routing of data among government agencies and business communities related to import, export and logistics services;

Component 2: Functional integrator and host, facilitating both process and data integration across information systems of participating agencies and businesses;

Component 3: Information systems of participating agencies and businesses, such as Permit Applications, Customs Declaration Applications, e-Customs Paperless Service, Payment Applications, and Tracking and Tracing;

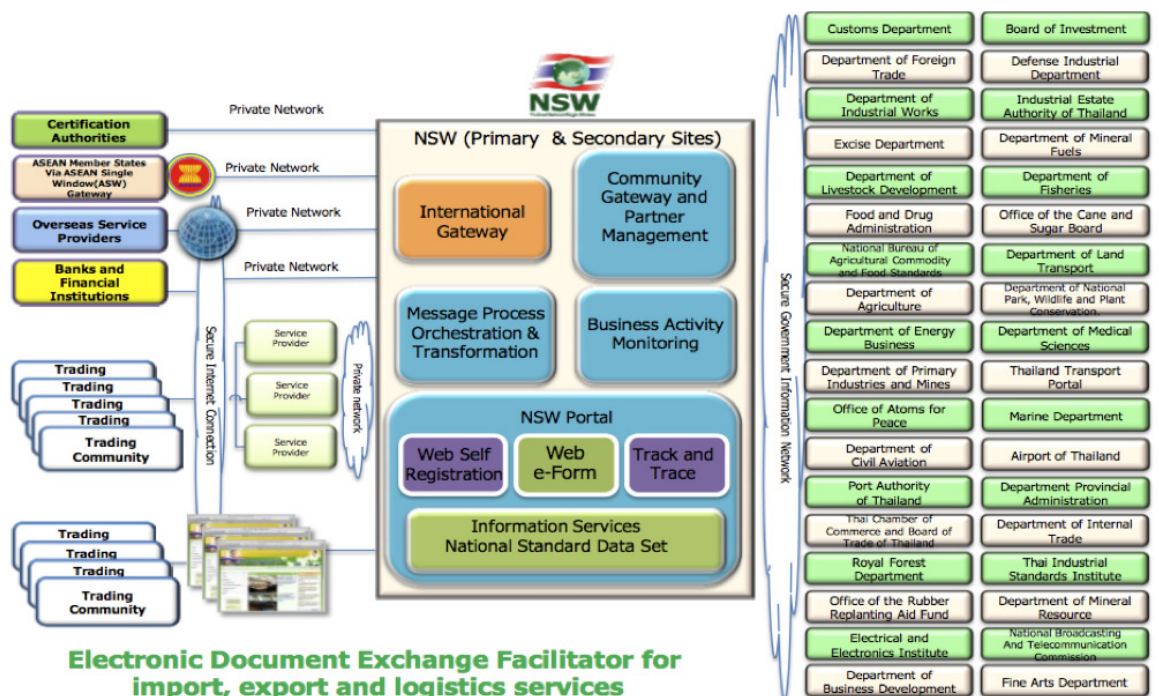
Component 4: International gateway, enabling a single point of access to the ASEAN Single Window and other Single Window systems outside ASEAN regions;

Component 5: An online repository of THAINSW documents, such as implementation guidelines, laws, regulations, agreements, MoU, training materials, reference files, a national standard data set, international standard code lists and study reports; and

Component 6: Electronic document submission channel, provided by value-added service providers (VAS).

The cost of putting in place Components 1-2 and 4-5 was about USD 14 million. It was funded solely by the Government of Thailand, through Royal Thai Customs.

Overview of THAINSW





Current Status of THAINSW and its Impacts

THAINSW was launched in July 2008. It has enabled the secure exchange of trade and transport e-documents among government agencies and businesses, as well as fully automated customs clearance and release at 660 customs stations nationwide. In November 2011, THAINSW had about 8,000 subscribers serving approximately 100,000 traders and 36 government authorities involved in import, export, logistics and supply chains.

All government agencies and traders can participate in the Single Window environment at no cost. Traders pay only a small fee for electronic document submission through VAS. For a transaction with data less 25 Kbytes, traders pay THB 25. They pay THB 1 for each additional Kbyte. The maximum charge is THB 300 regardless of the size of the data.

Improvements in Customs Clearance Processes

Customs clearance (per declaration)	Before 1998	1998-2007	2008-2011	
			Green	Red
Customs intervention	6-8 steps	2-4 steps	0 step	1 step
Intervention time	3-10 days	0.5-1 day	0 hour	0.5-1 hour
No. of required documents	5 documents	1-3 documents	0 document	1 document
Turnaround time	3-10 days	10-30 minutes	95% in 5 minutes	

THAINSW simplifies both processes and documents associated with international trade transactions. It provides a significant reduction in the number of processes, documents, and time required for completing regulatory requirements at borders. THAINSW has enabled Thailand to save logistics costs of about USD 1.5 billion per year.

Overall Export and Import Performance*

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Time to export (Days)	24	17	14	14	14
No. of documents for export	9	7	4	4	4
Cost to export (USD)	848	615	625	625	625
Time to import (Days)	22	14	13	13	13
No. of documents for import	12	9	3	3	3
Cost to import (USD)	1,042	786	795	795	795

*Source: World Bank "Doing Business"

Institutional Arrangements for NSW Implementation

The implementation of NSW involves stakeholders from various government agencies as well as trade and transport communities. Close collaboration among these organizations is therefore critical for project success.

In Thailand, interagency collaboration for NSW implementation was arranged through various Resolutions. These serve as mechanisms to coordinate the efforts of stakeholders from public and private sectors at both managerial and operational levels. They legitimize the establishment of necessary interagency collaborative platforms, provide mandates to designated organizations, and give them the authority to put NSW in place.



List of Interagency Collaborative Platforms, their Membership, and Mandates

Interagency Collaborative Platform	Mandate
<p>National Logistics Committee (Resolution issued by the Office of the Prime Minister)</p> <p>Chairmanship: Prime Minister</p> <p>Membership: Permanent secretaries from trade and transport-related Ministries and representatives from trade and transport-related associations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develop strategies to drive logistics development › Provide policy advice, i.e. Logistics Development Strategy, to the Cabinet › Approve action plans in areas related to logistics development › Support and monitor the implementation of the strategies and action plans › Establish sub-committees to handle various aspects of logistics development › Report progress to the Cabinet
<p>Sub-committee on Data Integration for Import, Export, and Logistics (Resolution issued by National Logistics Committee)</p> <p>Chairmanship: Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Finance</p> <p>Membership: Director Generals from government agencies that are involved in the administration of cross-border trade and representatives from trade and transport-related associations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develop the National Action Plan for the Implementation of THAINSW to Facilitate Import, Export, and Logistics as well as estimate budget required › Propose recommendations for the revision of laws, rules and regulations, or revise them to enable NSW implementation › Oversee NSW implementation › Establish working groups to assist the sub-committee in carrying out its tasks › Report progress to National Committee on Logistics Development
<p>Steering Committee on NSW Development (Resolution issued by Royal Thai Customs)</p> <p>Chairmanship: Director General, Royal Thai Customs</p> <p>Membership: Representatives from government agencies participating in the NSW project as well as representatives from MICT, Bureau of Budget, Department of Business Development, and Bank of Thailand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Assist the sub-committee in the development of the action plan for NSW implementation › Ensure that NSW is implemented according to the action plan › Establish working groups to 1) analyse business processes and data under the scope of NSW implementation, and 2) develop data inter-operability framework that conforms with international standards and the Agreement and Protocol to Establish and Implement the ASEAN Single Window
<p>Technical Working Group (Resolution issued by Steering Committee on NSW Development)</p> <p>Chairmanship: Director, Information and Communication Technology Division, Royal Thai Customs</p> <p>Membership: Experts from government agencies involved in the administration of cross-border trade and representatives from trade and transport-related associations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develop standard-conformant guidelines that facilitate the sharing and exchange of data between NSW and participating information systems › Develop standard-conformant guidelines that facilitate the deployment of PKI and digital signatures › Develop a Nation Standard Data Set which involves the alignment of data formats with WCO Data Set, UN/EDD, UN/CEFACT Core Component Library (CCL) and ASEAN Data Set › Develop a data model to specify data structure and format to be used by NSW and participating information systems › Provide a list of recommended changes to relevant laws, rules and regulations necessary for the operation of NSW › Support cross-border data integration according to national policy directives and international agreements › Complete the designated tasks within the specified timeframe › Coordinate the integration of data with relevant agencies › Report progress every 3 months to the Steering Committee on NSW Development
<p>Steering Committee on Regulatory Framework and Quality Assurance (Resolution issued by Royal Thai Customs)</p> <p>Chairmanship: Director General, Royal Thai Customs</p> <p>Membership: Experts from government agencies involved in the administration of cross-border trade and representatives from trade and transport-related associations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Examine business processes related to the administration of international trade transactions and associated times, costs, fees, laws, rules, regulations, and the degree of difficulty in completing them › Develop guidelines and standards for service delivery and propose them to relevant agencies for consideration › Support, oversee and assess the performance of participating agencies against the defined guidelines and standards › Report progress and difficulties to the Steering Committee on NSW Development every 2 months
<p>Legal Working Group (Resolution issued by Sub-committee on Data Integration for Import, Export, and Logistics)</p> <p>Chairmanship: Deputy Director General, Royal Thai Customs</p> <p>Membership: Experts from Office of the Council of State of Thailand, MICT, and government agencies that are involved in the administration of cross-border trade</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Revise existing laws, rules and regulations to support the integration of information that facilitates imports, exports and logistics (e.g., Electronic Transaction Act 2001 which is now under revision. The revised Act will further enhance information sharing in the paperless environment among relevant government and business sectors.)



Engine of Interagency Collaboration

Proper institutional arrangements are necessary, but are not sufficient. They provide frameworks for the collaboration, but not engines that drive the collaboration toward its goal.

Successful interagency collaboration for NSW implementation in Thailand owes much to the roles of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), Royal Thai Customs, and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT). Their roles, often performed by mid-rank government officials, not only keep all stakeholders engaged, make these stakeholders accountable for the project, and oblige them to collaborate, but also ensure the continuity of the NSW project when there are changes in government administrations.

The official mandate placed these government agencies in a strong position:

- NESDB, a government think-tank dealing with economic policy, was designated as secretary to the National Logistics Committee. It supports this committee in developing strategies to drive logistics development, by preparing policy advice to high-level decision makers, and advising the Cabinet of the status of logistics development. Its mandate allows NESDB to maintain political will and commitment for the project even in situations where turnover in ministerial and senior-official positions is high.
- Royal Thai Customs was appointed as secretary to the Subcommittee on Data Integration for Import, Export, and Logistics. As such, it assisted the sub-committee in drafting the National Action Plan for the Implementation of Thailand's NSW. To ensure that all sub-projects and budget plans from all participating government agencies were streamlined, Royal Thai Customs closely consulted government agencies participating in NSW implementation. Through close consultation, Royal Thai Customs engaged government agencies participating in NSW implementation in the drafting of the National Action Plan.
- Royal Thai Customs has also been designated by the Cabinet as the lead agency to coordinate and accelerate NSW implementation. As such, it has the authority to establish special bodies to steer and carry out activities leading

to the establishment of NSW. It can also request experts from government agencies involved in the administration of cross-border trade and representatives from trade and transport-related associations to support the operation of those special bodies. Collaboration at this level is crucial for moving the project forward.

- MICT was appointed by the Cabinet to handle the managerial aspects of NSW implementation. It facilitated interagency coordination through the Project Management Office (PMO) set up by MICT's Office of the Permanent Secretary. Together with Royal Thai Customs, MICT organized several high-level awareness-raising events. These events helped foster common understanding of the project, aligned stakeholders' expectations, and solidified their commitments. MICT also organized several information-sharing sessions on relevant methods, tools, techniques and standards. These events contributed confidence in the development approach and trust among all stakeholders.

Lessons Learned

The formalization of interagency collaboration and mandates using the top-down approach is critical to ensure the effectiveness of such collaboration. Voluntary participation and self-regulation may be appropriate for setting up collaborative partnerships in other domains, but not in a large-scale e-government project involving stakeholders from government agencies across ministries and the private sector.

Institutional arrangements for interagency collaboration are required at all levels, i.e., policy-making, managerial and operational.

- The interagency collaborative platform at the policy-making level provides a channel to uphold political will and support for the project.
- The interagency collaborative platform at the managerial level induces senior-level officials from relevant ministries to streamline their work plans and resources.
- The interagency collaborative platforms at the operational level draw together experts from government agencies involved in the administration of cross-border trade and rep-



representatives from trade and transport-related associations, to lay the technical and legal groundwork for NSW implementation.

The role that the lead agency plays is critical to project success.

- › The lead agency should have a strong team with sound knowledge of trade facilitation and the Single Window in both policy and technical aspects.

- › The lead agency should engage other players in the implementation process through focus group workshops, especially in the area of business process analysis, business process redesign, and data harmonization, to ensure that important issues fundamental to NSW establishment are agreed upon by all stakeholders.

References

- Royal Thai Customs, Developing National Single Window for Import, Export and Logistics: Case of Thailand (2012).
- Sinmahat Kiatjanon, "National Single Window in Thailand," Trade Facilitation Workshop (Katmandu, 8-9 February 2011). Available from: www.unescap.org/tid/projects/tfsw_sinmahat.pdf

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