



# An appraisal of the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021-2025(FCSSIP25) for the Transformation of Nigeria's Federal Civil Service



John Olushola Magbadelo\*

*B.Sc( Pol.Sci), M.Sc.( International Relations), Ph.D.(Political Science)*

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**\*Corresponding author:** John Olushola Magbadelo, Lead Director, Centre for African & Asian Studies, Abuja, Nigeria, Email: solamagbadelo@gmail.com

## Abstract

The Nigerian Federal Civil Service has been going through series of well-conceived reforms across different historical epochs. The greatest impact of these reforms was recorded during the country's fourth republic when the efforts at re-positioning the Federal Civil Service are being guided by a comprehensive blueprint known as the National Strategy for Public Service Reforms (NSPSR) which consigned Civil Service Administration Reforms to the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF). Since the NSPSR was published in 2009, the Federal Civil Service had no implementation plan for its intended reforms until 2016 when efforts were geared toward the development of the first implementation plan known as Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan 2017-2020(FCSSIP20) which was launched in 2018 and was subsequently implemented till December 2020. The successor plan, FCSSIP25, which came into existence in December 2021 consequent upon its approval by the Federal Executive Council (FEC), was officially launched by President Buhari on 23rd June, 2022, and since then, its implementation has commenced full blast. The FCSSIP25 has continued to provide focus and structure for the series of reforms that are ongoing in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service. However, the question is whether or not the FCSSIP25 would transform the federal civil service into "a world class service for accelerated national development" by 2025 despite some constraining factors including funding, cultural, behavioral and attitudinal orientations among others.

**Keywords:** Public Service Reforms; Civil Service; Reforms Strategy; Reforms Plan; Culture Change Survey

**Abbreviations:** NSPSR: National Strategy for Public Service Reforms; FEC: Federal Executive Council; OSGF: Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation; IPPIS-HR: Integrated Personnel & Payroll Information System - Human Resources; OHCSF: Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation; ISO: International Standard Organization; PMS: Performance Management System; LEAD-P: Leadership Enhancement and Development Programme; SMAT-P: Structured Mandatory Assessment-based Training Programme; CMD: Centre for Management Development; PSIN: Public Service Institute of Nigeria; ASCON: Administrative Staff College of Nigeria; MDIs: Manpower Development Institutions; APER: Annual Performance Evaluation Report; ARS: Anonymous Reporting System; ECMS: Enterprise Content Management Solution; SOPs: Standard Operating Procedures; R&RS: Reward and Recognition Scheme; AIG: Africa Initiative for Governance; PSR: Public Service Rules; DTA: Duty Tour Allowances; D-CST: Director-Civil Service Transformation; PMTs: Project Management Teams

## Introduction

The subject of this article falls under "institutional reforms", and consideration of the series of steps being taken by the headship of the federal civil service to reposition Nigeria's federal bureaucracy would be highlighted from the standpoint of the FCSSIP 25 blueprint. What is here regarded as the blueprint is the work plan for the implementation of needed reforms in the Service. This well-intentioned document is aimed at giving direction to the reform process and to ensure the delivery of certain outcomes and milestones within stipulated timelines.

There is no question regarding the relevance and necessity of the pursuit of reforms in Nigeria's public service when other countries with very efficient public service systems are reforming their operations and institutions. The effectiveness and efficiency of any country's institutions determine, to a large extent, the capacity of the governance machinery of that country to deliver requisite dividends to its citizenry. Institutional reforms enable public institutions to be responsive to old and emerging challenges of governance, thereby ensuring their continuing

relevance. Institutional reforms are a regular feature of the civil services of developed countries [1]. The changing dynamics in the world of work have been compelling reforms in the civil services of developing countries as well [2]. Nigeria has not spared efforts at reforming its public service institutions over the years. The Bureau for Public Service Reforms published a document known as the National Strategy for Public Service Reforms (NSPSR) in 2009, which was to provide a roadmap for carrying out reforms in the different segments of the country's public service [3].

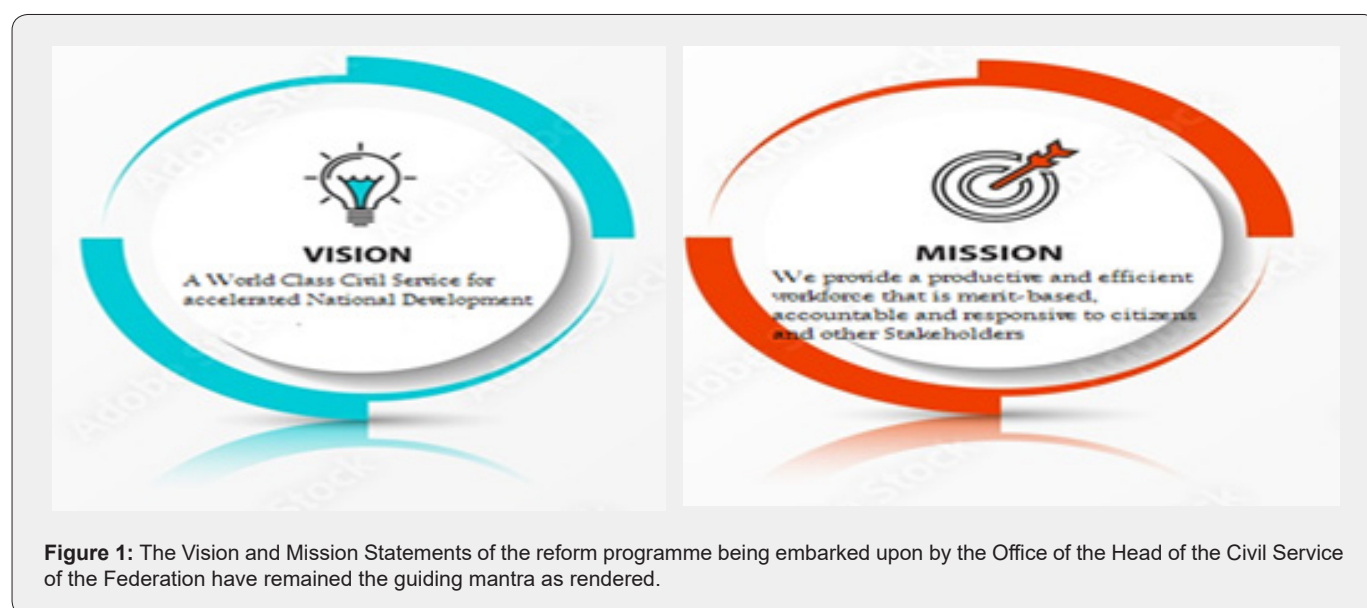
The NSPSR divided the needed reforms in the public service into four areas of focus comprising the following:

- i. Governance reforms consigned to the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (OSGF).
- ii. Socio-economic enabling environment reforms assigned to the Ministry of Finance.
- iii. Financial Management and Accounting reforms - Ministry of Budget and National Planning.
- iv. Civil Service Administration reforms- to be carried out by the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation [4].

It is remarkable that since the publication and popularization of the NSPSR in 2009, the mandate of civil service administration reforms was not pursued scientifically until 2016 when the first FCSSIP 2017- 2020 was conceived. Hitherto, reforms in the civil service were undertaken piecemeal without any clear-cut roadmap for a holistic approach. Yet the Service was in dire need of far-reaching reforms which were desirable for its repositioning and transformation in response to the global dynamics impinging on the world of work, which had been impacting public service institutions across the world [5]. Although FCSSIP20 could not achieve much, given the limited timelines of its implementation in

view of its late approval in 2018 by the Federal Executive Council- Nigeria's highest decision-making body- it however, created awareness among relevant stakeholders about some specific objectives of addressing the problems in the country's civil service through systematic implementation of different activities over the plan period indicated in the FCSSIP20 document.

Although, the objectives of the FCSSIP20 reforms could not be pursued with requisite vigor because the critical segments of the Service, especially the directorate level officers whose support was needed were not galvanized for their buy-in for its implementation, the emergence of Dr. Folasade Yemi-Esan in August 2019 as the Head of Service (HOS) brought tremendous energy and passion into the implementation of FCSSIP20 which was already approaching its terminal date. Subsequently, the HOS promptly commenced the process for the review of the FCSSIP20 and the preparation and production of a successor Plan. In all of this, multiple stakeholders including the private sector, development partners, civil society and directorate level officers in the service participated at the different fora which were organized for the validation of the draft successor plan known as the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021-2025(FCSSIP25). Since the approval of FCSSIP25 by the FEC in December 2021, the implementation of requisite reforms in the Service received renewed fillip and vigor. FCSSIP25 is Nigeria's well-conceived reform blueprint for re-positioning the federal bureaucracy to suit the transformative requirements of modern civil service administration and make it a world-class Service by 2025. The Vision and Mission Statements of the reform program being embarked upon by the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation have remained the guiding mantra as rendered below: (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** The Vision and Mission Statements of the reform programme being embarked upon by the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation have remained the guiding mantra as rendered.

The rationale for a holistic plan document for reform implementation in the civil service cannot be overemphasized. First, the plan document recognizes the need to prioritize reform activities that would be impactful on the Service. Certain activities which ought to be undertaken ahead of others to prod reforms in other areas, were identified and carefully x-rayed and incorporated into the plan for implementation. Second, the plan helps in coordinating reform efforts for efficient and effective utilization of available resources. Third, frivolities would be avoided and reform efforts are well-focused on the right areas in need of attention in the Service. Fourth, the plan directs attention to the Vision and Mission Statements guiding the reform efforts. Fifth, the plan enables the galvanization of resources- human and material- for the actualization of clearly defined objectives. How achievable are the objectives of the FCSSIP25 within the stipulated timelines for the delivery of all the milestones projected in the plan document? How can the sustainability of the outcomes of the reform process be ensured? An attempt would be made to chronicle some notable achievements of the FCSSIP25 reforms while appraising the contents, consequences and constraints of the reforms and their implications for the future of Nigeria’s civil service administration.

**The Contents of FCSSIP25**

Putting together a strategy and implementation plan for carrying out reforms in the federal civil service was no mean task. It involved series of brainstorming sessions attended by relevant stakeholders which comprised cerebral serving officers, representatives of development partners, civil society groups, and organized private sector [6]. After the production of a composite draft of the FCSSIP25, validation workshops were held to subject the draft document to clinical review. The inputs from the validation workshops were processed and incorporated into the plan document [7]. This FCSSIP25 reform blueprint is a creative design meant to give direction to the reform process in the Service. Since its enunciation, FCSSIP25 has provided a clear roadmap for the seamless implementation of requisite reforms in sync with the expectation of the National Strategy for Public Service Reform. As it has been shown, the systematic involvement or co-optation of relevant stakeholders including the development partners, private sector and civil society organizations, in the reform process was a strategy that greatly facilitated the timely attainment of needed results. The diagrammatic representation of the contents of the FCSSIP25 is as shown hereunder: (Figure 3).

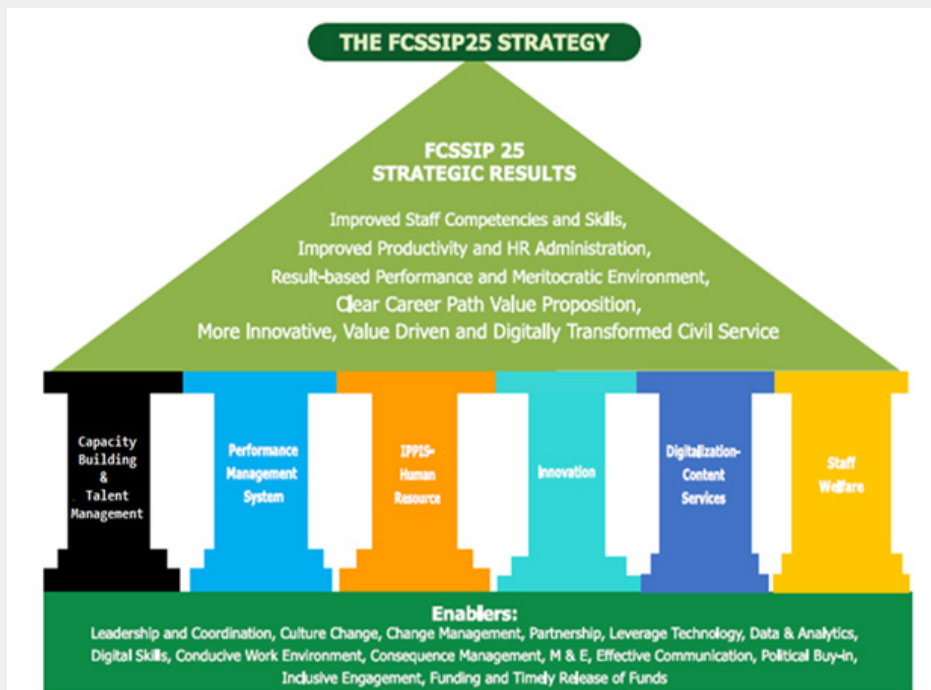


Figure 2: Source: FCSSIP25 Booklet.

As indicated above, the plan has six priority areas, which are represented by six pillars namely: Capability Building and Talent Management; PPerformance Management System Integrated Personnel & Payroll Information System - Human Resources (PPIS-HR); Innovation: Digitalization of Content Services, and Staff

Welfare. Each of these pillars has series of activities to be carried out from the commencement of the plan cycle to its end in 2025. Progressively, FCSSIP25 reforms have been striving to achieve the following objectives since its commencement:

i. Intensification and institutionalization of capability building and talent management in the Service which would result in improved staff competencies and skills.

ii. A well-coordinated and rig-proof Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) consequent upon the incorporation of HR Module into the IPPIS platform.

iii. Institutionalization of result-based performance Management System and the creation of meritocratic environment in the Service.

iv. The emplacement of institutional structures for the realization of a more innovative, value-driven and digitally transformed civil service.

v. Unparalleled improvement in Staff welfare through the enhancement of value proposition for civil servants.

vi. Intensification of civil servants' reorientation to embrace the values of Accountability, Meritocracy, professionalism, Loyalty, and Efficiency [8].

For an empirical appreciation of the impact of FCSSIP25 reforms across the Service, a pillar-by-pillar highlight of its achievements would suffice. This approach would demonstrate the strengths or otherwise of the FCSSIP25 plan document and what amendments, if any, are necessary.

### Consequences of FCSSIP25 Reforms

A brief overview of the impact of the ongoing reforms across the Service, beginning with how the Head of Service, Dr. Folasade Yemi-Esan has been providing leadership and coordination for the reform process, would show the evident and demonstrable changes in both the operations and processes of the Ministries, Extra-Ministerial Departments and Agencies (MDAs). At the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) today, the digitalization of work processes have been fully actualized; all records, policy and personal files have been scanned into digital formats, and the workflow is digitally processed. The OHCSF has gone paperless in its operations. A quarterly performance assessment regime has been emplaced to ensure that all MDAs are implementing FCSSIP25 reforms, and this has ensured healthy competition among Permanent Secretaries in pursuit of the objectives of the reforms. In January 2023, the International Standard Organization (ISO) certified the OHCSF on Quality Management System (9001/ 2015) after an in-depth assessment of the operational processes of the OHCSF [9]. The OHCSF has charged the National SERVICOM Office to work with the MDAs and ensure that they earn a similar certification of their processes by the ISO. In addition, the processes for the full automation of the new Performance Management System (PMS) across the Service have commenced, and evidently, in due course, the entire Federal Civil Service would have established a result-based and meritocratic Performance Management System.

### Capacity Building and Talent Management

The emphasis of the FCSSIP25 reform work plan is on building the capacity of serving officers to enhance and sustain improved performance and high-quality service delivery across the Service. As the first pillar in the strategy and implementation plan, there is an understanding among the reform drivers that efforts should be made to create a competitive knowledge-driven environment in the Service as a way of re-positioning the Service as a world class civil service through the deployment and utilization of knowledge-enhancing, modern and capacity building digital technology which only vibrant knowledge-seeking and adaptive officers could internalize. To actualize the objectives of the capacity-building and talent management pillar, three training modules known as "Leadership Enhancement and Development Programme (LEAD-P), Structured Mandatory and Assessment-based Training Programme (SMAT-P) and Induction Programme were redesigned and re-launched for improved effectiveness [10].

**The Leadership Enhancement and Development Programme (LEAD-P)** is carefully packaged to attract young graduate officers on grade levels 10 - 14 who still had up to 15 years to serve and with proven digital skills that are ready to acquire additional knowledge in policy-making and implementation, policy-impact assessment, report writing, power-point presentation, among other relevant subject areas. The target of the LEAD-P scheme is to produce 500 graduates of the scheme before the terminal date of the FCSSIP25 in 2025. Those who got placement on this scheme were competitively selected after participating in both written and oral examinations. The successful candidates were exposed to rigorous training for 7 months at the Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN). During the training, the trainees were made to undergo internship for a cumulative period of five weeks at different Ministries, Extra-Ministerial Departments, and Agencies to which they were deployed. Thereafter, a report on the performance of these interns were confidentially forwarded to the PSIN by the MDAs where they served while the interns also presented their own reports on their engagements and experiences during their internship. The first batch of 118 LEAD-P graduates that completed their training on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2022 had since then been posted to strategic areas of relevance where their talents and skills are required in the Service. The second batch of 108 LEAD-P graduates who recently completed their training would soon be deployed strategically across the Service. It is important to point out that these LEAD-P officers are placed under the tutelage of Permanent Secretaries for continuous mentorship and supervision [11].

**The Structured Mandatory Assessment-based Training Programme (SMAT-P)** is another capacity building programme. This is for all senior officers on grade levels 07- 17. The programme has three categories comprising Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced levels which appropriate officers are selected from the

MDAs from time to time to attend at the PSIN. It is on record that since the commencement of the programme, 4,003 officers have attended the programme. The target is to get all eligible officers across the Service to attend the SMAT-P before the expiration of the FCSSIP25 plan in 2025 [12].

**The Induction Programme** is the third service wide capacity building training module which is specifically designed for new entrants into the Service either as serving officers or as assistants to political appointees. This programme recognizes the importance of timely sensitization of new entrants into the Service which would enable them to blend in seamlessly and prevent them from making avoidable mistakes in their new roles in the Service. Since the commencement of this programme, 1,751 officers comprising those newly recruited between 2017 and 2019 and assistants of political appointees have been trained. Even the newly appointed permanent Secretaries are now inducted to their new role in the Service. The annual capacity building programme for Permanent Secretaries has become institutionalized over time. The plan to roll-out induction training via e-learning solution has just been finalised by the OHCSF, and subsequent induction programmes would be held virtually [13].

Overall, there is ample evidence that these three training modules are impacting the Service positively because many officers have acquired requisite capacities for the progressive transformation of the Service. In a related development, the OHCSF has reinvigorated the conversion scheme for officers who have acquired additional qualifications and are desirous of being converted to cadres that they were hitherto unqualified to enter. Qualified officers for conversions are required to attend a prescribed training programme at the PSIN, after which they are converted and posted to new cadres in the Service. Already, 214 officers have been converted to Planning Officers Cadre to resuscitate that cadre which had almost become extinct. The Federal Government Manpower Development Institutions (MDIs) comprising Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN), and the Centre for Management Development (CMD) have accordingly been repositioned and equipped to deliver on the capacity building objectives of the FCSSIP25. As an incentive for training, 50% of Duty Tour Allowance has been approved for payment to officers attending any capacity training programme at the MDI situated at the location of their duty post [14].

### Performance Management System

Performance Management entails the assessment, measurement and improvement of performance of personnel in a work situation. The Federal Civil Service is putting together a Performance Management System that will systematically monitor and evaluate job-based performance of employees. As the 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar of FCSSIP25, the new PMS is emplacing a performance assessment model to replace the now-dysfunctional Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER). The new PMS

is performance output- driven, with emphasis on productivity. Over 3,900 officers service-wide have been trained on the new PMS. The sensitization programme on PMS remains a continuous effort until the new system is fully emplaced across the Service. To broaden the scope and fast-track the installation of the new PMS, the PMS policy and Guidelines were developed and circulated to the MDAs. In addition, Service-wide Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been developed and has been made one of the Key Performance Indicators for assessing the compliance of MDAs with service delivery standards.

The certification of the OHCSF on Quality Management System 9001/2015 by the International Standard Organization in January 2023 gave renewed impetus to the implementation of the new PMS in the Service and indicated the possibility of replicating that feat in all the MDAs through an already established collaboration with the National SERVICOM Office. In addition, the incorporation of PMS in the 2021 Public Service Rules, implies that all the MDAs have been charged to take necessary steps to emplace the new PMS which would completely terminate the use of the old Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) which had become a major disincentive to qualitative service delivery, high performance and productivity in the Service.

### Integrated Personnel & Payroll Information System - Human Resource (IPPIS-HR)

Preceding the introduction of the IPPIS in 2005, the payroll system was decentralized and that system was terribly abused by the MDAs, as many names of non-existing workers were injected into the payment vouchers of the MDAs. These fake names otherwise known as ghost workers shot up the wage bills across the MDAs. With the introduction of the digital payment platform which is known as IPPIS, the ghost workers were removed for some time as a result of the biometric capturing of all serving officers in the Federal Civil Service. But, after a short period of its operation, the IPPIS platform which was domiciled in the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation was soon to be violated by the injection of more ghost workers into the platform. The IPPIS verification exercises which were conducted exposed varying levels of violations, thereby challenging the essence and rationale of IPPIS payment platform and the placement of the platform in the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation. Little wonder that at a later date, a former Accountant-General of the Federation was found to have exploited the loopholes in the old IPPIS platform and other gaps in the country's financial and accounting systems to line his own pocket to the tune of N109.4 billion [15].

However, corrective steps which were encapsulated in the FCSSIP25 blueprint had to be taken to reposition the IPPIS platform for improved service delivery. The implementation of FCSSIP25 reforms which led to the incorporation of Human Resource Module into the IPPIS solution and the eventual domiciliation of the IPPIS platform in the OHCSF ensured that the violation of

the IPPIS became very difficult and almost an impossible task because of the higher levels of encryption and supervision built into the system. The IPPIS-HR component provides procedures for detailed registration of the Federal Government employees that are on the IPPIS platform for proper manpower planning and allied administrative processes [16]. Through the systematic interrogation of the IPPIS records, 1,618 officers whose letters of employment were either fake or illegal were detected. And as a result of the verification audit carried out by the Federal Civil Service Commission, the names of another 3,657 workers who did not present themselves for the exercise were sent to the ICPC for investigation. At the IPPIS verification exercise carried out by the OHCSF, in June 2022 for core MDAs in the six geopolitical zones, 66, 446 officers were verified. The OHCSF also conducted the verification exercise for newly recruited staff between 2017 and 2019 in core MDAs numbering 2, 360. The staff in non-core MDAs were also verified during the period [17].

To enable access to the IPPIS platform, the OHCSF carried out massive and extensive End-User Training for all Role Players and self-Service Training in all the Ministries. The IPPIS-HR is live in all Ministries and the on-boarding of existing IPPIS Users has been done. However, as more people could now access the IPPIS platform, upload their updates and sign on and off at will, as a result of the series of training programmes held on self-service, the platform could face new challenges. In early 2023, some directorate level officers attempted unsuccessfully to alter their dates of birth and dates of first appointment in order to prolong their stay in the Service; the officers were individually picked up and sent to ICPC for investigation. This was possible because currently, the IPPIS platform is functioning optimally well as a result of the reforms that had been carried out on it [18]. In all, the OHCSF has carried out several verification exercises of public servants, has fully deployed the HR Component of IPPIS, and has taken over the ownership of the IPPIS, and would soon initiate certificate verification of all staff on the IPPIS platform.

### Innovation

This 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of FCSSIP25 lays premium on the promotion of creativity and ingenuity among staff of the MDAs. The OHCSF has taken steps to popularize and institutionalize Innovation as an important aspect of the ongoing reforms in the Service, aimed at enhancing institutional renewal for improved efficiency and effectiveness. According to the FCSSIP25 document, innovation in the Public Service refers to conceiving a creative idea and successfully implementing it to solve a pressing Public Service problem. It is an effective, creative and unique answer to new problems or a new answer to old problems [19]. The HOS established Service Innovation Department in the OHCSF to oversee Service Innovation Divisions which are domiciled in Departments of Reform Coordination and Service Improvement in the MDAs for the sustenance of Innovation in the Service. The Service Innovation Divisions across the MDAs have the mandate of facilitating the processing of innovative ideas in the MDAs

through a well-coordinated functional relationship with the Service Innovation Department in the OHCSF. It is believed that innovation culture can be nurtured in the Service when creative ideas are harvested and incubated by the established structures. For an idea to qualify as an innovative one, it should provide high impact and transformative solutions to existing problems for the benefit of the Service through waste reduction, reduction in cost of governance and enhancement of revenue generation [20].

To create a competitive environment for the promotion of innovation culture, the OHCSF instituted a programme known as Innovation Challenge and held its maiden edition in August 2020 while the second edition was held in December, 2021. The third edition of the event was held in November, 2022. During these innovation competitions, quality prizes were given to the winners. The following are some of the innovative solutions that won prizes at the previous competitions:

- i. Anonymous Reporting System (ARS) - Whistle-blower.
- ii. Computer-based Examination System for timely conduct and release of COMPRO and Promotion Exercises in the Federal Civil Service.
- iii. A virtual administrative tool for the conduct of the Federal Government business.
- iv. Safer cough/Sneeze Etiquette using Paper towels [21].

Evidently, there is a growing awareness across the federal civil service that creativity and innovative ideas now attract rewards, and consequently, a climate of healthy competition has been created with resultant improvement in staff competencies. And to deepen and institutionalize the practice of innovation in the Service, every MDA is now expected to establish Innovations and Inventions Committee in compliance with the provisions of Chapter 15 of the 2021 Revised Public Service Rules.

### Digitalization of Content Services

In the drive towards the realization of technology-driven civil service, the OHCSF has explored and initiated partnerships for the deployment of an Enterprise Content Management Solution (ECMS) across the Service, beginning with the OHCSF. In collaboration with the Africa Initiative for Governance (AIG), the OHCSF has done the requisite foundational work to prepare the Service for the deployment of the ECMS. In July 2020, a Culture Change Joint Project Committee was set up in collaboration with AIG with the objective of delivering the Enterprise Content Management Solution (ECMS), and that has achieved the following milestones:

- i. Review of ECMS Operations and processes.
- ii. Review of documented functional and technical requirements for the ECMS Platform.
- iii. Development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and

- iv. Establishment of Change and Communications Management.
- v. End-User Training of 16 MDA staff on digitization and ECMS.
- vi. Conduct of ECM readiness survey in 35 MDAs.
- vii. Provision of Standardized Digitization Equipment.
- viii. Procurement process & Selection of ECM vendor
- ix. Acquisition of Hardware and Software. SOPs have been integrated with the software and the test-run of the solution ahead of full deployment has been done.
- x. Training on ISO-9001(2015) conducted for 40 officers.
- xi. Establishment of OHCSF Scanning Centre.
- xii. Scanning of Policy and Personal Files in the OHCSF.
- xiii. Sensitization of Directors of Reform, ICT, and HRM in 35 MDAs and development of a roadmap for replication of ECM at MDA level [22].

In view of the above milestones achieved by the OHCSF in the drive towards the full digitalization of work processes in the Service, it is evident that the deployment and use of digital technology in the Service is being encouraged and facilitated by the OHCSF. FCSSIP25 conceives digitalization as the application of digital technology for the enhancement of work processes in the civil service to promote efficiency, timeliness, cost reduction and quality service delivery. There is a subsisting directive by the HOS that all MDAs should establish their Enterprise Content Management Centers to facilitate the creation of digital work flow stations and the deployment of digital technology within each MDA. All MDAs have been directed to transform all their manual records into digital formats. At the OHCSF, the use of physical files had since June 2023 been prohibited because digital workflows had been established across all Departments in the OHCSF. It is noteworthy that some of the MDAs including Transportation, Communications and Digital Economy, Education, Cabinet Affairs Office, State House etc., are doing well with their digitalization projects, and hopefully before the terminal date of FCSSIP25, many more would have emplaced digital work processes in their offices.

As a result of the growing digital revolution in the Service, Virtual meetings are now approved as alternative platforms for the conduct of government business. This arose largely from the lessons of Covid-19 pandemic when the government had to resort to carrying out its business through digital platforms created for that purpose. All the MDAs are doing very well in this regard, especially so because of the compelling force exerted by the HOS whose insistence on holding some very important meetings in the Service on virtual platforms left no other option for the MDAs than to plug in by upgrading their digital facilities. Chapter 9 of the 2021 Public Service Rules (PSR) contains guidelines for virtual meetings and related engagements in the Service.

### Staff Welfare

Staff Welfare as the sixth pillar occupies an important and strategic placement in the architecture of the FCSSIP25 pyramid as the edge pillar. The OHCSF has done a lot in driving reforms in this priority area to accomplish the following:

**The Federal Integrated Staff Housing Programme:** The Federal Integrated Staff Housing (FISH) Department in the OHCSF which is in charge of Federal Integrated Staff Housing Programme, has been facilitating mortgage loans for civil servants that are desirous of owning houses under the scheme. In 2021, 139 civil servants were assisted to access mortgage facilities and their houses were delivered to them. And in 2022, the FISH Department facilitated the mortgage loans of additional 19 off-takers and they also accessed their houses. The Department is processing additional 70 off-takers for housing loans. The development of FISH Estate behind the Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN) Kubwa has commenced with speed. Construction works are ongoing on the 5 hectares of land given to OHCSF by the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing for 116 housing units at Gwagwalada. The target is for the OHCSF to deliver 500 houses yearly to civil servants [23].

**Entrepreneurship programme for prospective Retirees:** The OHCSF has developed an Entrepreneurship programme that would enable civil servants to acquire useful skills for post-Service survival when they retire. Agripreneurship which is a component of the programme is a skill acquisition programme in different areas of agriculture including farming, snailry, rabbitry, fishery, poultry, etc., was launched on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2023. It is for officers who would soon be proceeding on retirement with a view to enhancing their post-service survival. The target is to empower 500 interested civil servants and retirees to acquire agripreneurship skills yearly [24].

**Institutionalization of Reward and Recognition Scheme(R&RS):** Since 2021, at a special event during the yearly celebration of the Civil Service Week, the OHCSF in partnership with the Africa Initiative for Governance (AIG) has been celebrating staff with outstanding performance drawn from all the MDAs with the presentation of fabulous gifts of cars, houses, and huge sums of money to those that were competitively selected for the awards. The inclusion of the R&RS in the 2021 Public Service Rules (PSR) is an indication of the determination of the HOS to institutionalize the Reward and Recognition Scheme (Chapter 6 of the 2021 PSR) [25].

**Upward Review of Duty Tour Allowances for Civil Servants:** The OHCSF got the Federal Executive Council's approval for an upward review of the Duty Tour Allowances (DTA) for civil servants [26].

**Timely payment of Death Benefits of Deceased Staff:** The OHCSF has been working to ensure the judicious disbursement of death benefit entitlements to the next of kin of deceased officers

who died whilst in Service when insurance cover was not provided by the Federal Government [27].

### **Restoration of Annual Leave based on the working days:**

The HOS sought and obtained the approval of the Federal Executive Council (FEC) for the re-computation of Annual Leave on the basis of the working days, not calendar days. This change is reflected in the 2021 PSR (Chapter 12).

**Introduction of Paternity Leave:** The approval of paternity leave as a provision in the 2021 PSR by the FEC is anchored on the understanding and belief that it would provide male officers the opportunity to bond with their new born babies and contribute to the early care of their infants. This leave is for fourteen working days. It shall not be more than once in two years, and for a maximum of four children. This is also applicable in event of official adoption of a baby not more than four months old [28].

### **Progressive efforts at harmonizing salaries of Workers:**

The Presidential Committee on the harmonization of workers' salaries is a standing Committee which is working to remove the disparities in the different salary structures in the public service in order to gradually raise salaries of civil servants to an appreciable level yearly till they are at par with other salary structures over a given period of time. Sometimes in April 2023, the Committee got the Federal Executive Council to approve the payment of 40% of basic salaries of civil servants as peculiar allowances to all federal civil servants. The process continues as the Committee which is being co-chaired by the Ministers of Finance and Labour and Employment is resolutely determined to deliver on the mandate of the Committee. The HOS is an active member of the Committee [29].

Several other staff welfare-related reforms are taking place across the Service. The wellness centre which was established by the HCSF for all civil servants is providing free medical screening to civil servants and gadgets for physical exercises have been installed for staff use for free. Efforts are ongoing to refurbish Federal Civil Service Staff Clubs across the states of the federation.

### **Attitudinal and Behavioral component of FCSSIP-25**

No doubt, a lot has been achieved by the six pillars of FCSSIP25, and a lot more would be achieved before its terminal date, if the implementation of the plan document is on course. However, the changes brought about by the reforms would be unsustainable without complementary attitudinal and behavioral adjustments on the part of the civil servants. That is why the core values espoused by the FCSSIP25 which comprise: Accountability, Meritocracy, Professionalism, Loyalty and Efficiency, also known by its acronym as AMPLE Core values are critical enablers for the sustenance of the reforms in the Service. A brief definition of each of these concepts would suffice:

**i. Accountability:** taking responsibility for tasks assigned and giving feedback or report on same.

**ii. Meritocracy:** being just in dealings with others; ensuring that those who do the work are those to be rewarded; engage or recruit staff based on competencies.

**iii. Professionalism:** do the work the best way possible; acquire needed skills for performance and competence upgrade; embrace new ways of working.

**iv. Loyalty:** a sense of allegiance to the Service, constituted authority and the citizenry according to law

**v. Efficiency:** work hard and turn in your assigned tasks on time; ensure high quality delivery, and be prudent in the utilization of resources [30].

These core values of the New Civil Service have wider dimensions and ramifications; and if internalized by civil servants, the Service would be fully transformed for impactful and high-quality service delivery.

### **Constraints and Challenges**

From the foregoing, it would appear that the implementation of the FCSSIP25 reforms is on course and that its objectives are receiving priority attention of reform drivers. But certain factors and forces which might not be visible to those outside, are contending at one level or another to frustrate the implementation of FCSSIP25 reforms like every other change-oriented initiatives. The following are some of the notable constraints:

#### **Funding Challenge:**

The funding of FCSSIP25 across the Service is a serious challenge. So many of the MDAs are unable to meet up with the funding requirements for the implementation of the activities spelt out in the FCSSIP25. Originally, the Plan was projected to cost N20.6 billion over four years of its implementation (2022- 2025) [31]. But the inflationary spiral in the country's economy means that the plan would require more funding than what was anticipated. Only 29 Ministries which requested the OHCSF to sensitize their staff on FCSSIP25 were sensitized between 2022 and-2023 out of 43 Ministries. The OHCSF could not bear the financial burden of carrying out service wide sensitization on FCSSIP25 despite the fact that the communication plan of the FCSSIP25 emphasizes and prioritizes sensitization of all civil servants on the objectives and processes of all ongoing reforms in the Service.

#### **Absence of Sanction for Poor Performance**

Although the civil servants that are deemed to have performed excellently well across the MDAs in the course of the year have since 2021 been recognized and rewarded appropriately, there is no record of any sanction meted out to non-performing officers. Even the quarterly performance tracking reports received from the MDAs on the implementation of FCSSIP25 are not processed beyond mere assignment of scores to the pillar by pillar performance of each of the MDAs. There is no known sanction



that the HOS has imposed on any of the non-performing MDAs. Yet, some MDAs have not done anything on FCSSIP25 since its implementation began. Could it be that the office of the HOS lacks such powers? It was reported recently that some permanent secretaries refused to comply with the approved Posting Instruction, in violation of the Public Service Rules [32]. The Office of the HOS should command resources and should be respected across the Service. Any violation of extant rules, and deliberate refusal to implement FCSSIP25 reform which was approved by the FEC, should be visited with sufficient sanctions. In the absence of such sanctions for poor or non-performance, it is doubtful if the FCSSIP25 reform would be uniformly implemented across the Service for the realization of its objectives before its terminal date in 2025.

### Culture Change Challenge

It is generally believed that the FCSSIP25 reform is anchored on the AMPLÉ Core Values of Accountability, Meritocracy, Professionalism, Loyalty, and Efficiency. But, the absence of a new Service Culture Handbook which should highlight these acceptable core values with the intent of re-orientating and causing desirable attitudinal and behavioral changes in the way and manner civil servants attend to their duties, is a misnomer. It is anti-intellectualism to assume that Nigerian civil servants do not read, and therefore should not be burdened with another literature on Service Culture of the envisaged new Civil Service.

### Problematic Governance Structure of FCSSIP25 in the OHCSF

The current governance structure for the implementation of FCSSIP25 service wide which is domiciled in the OHCSF is problematic. Each of the pillars of the FCSSIP25 has a Project Management Team (PMT) headed by a Director handling similar schedule in the OHCSF. Membership of each of the PMTs is drawn from the MDAs. The six PMTs report to the Director-Civil Service Transformation (D-CST) who heads the FCSSIP Secretariat. The D-CST reports to the Permanent Secretary, Service Policies and Strategy Office (PS-SPSO). The PS-SPSO reports to the HOS. By the work plan, the PMTs should meet regularly to assess the implementation of ongoing reforms with reference to their activities. The problem of this governance structure is that the DCST being a Director was expected to oversight the PMT heads who are also Directors- a situation that contradicts extant civil service reporting protocols. Expectedly, the PMT heads found ways of absenting most meetings of the FCSSIP25 Secretariat headed by the D-CST, while sending their deputies to represent them because they politely resented being supervised by a colleague on the same grade level. Obviously, the head of the FCSSIP25 Secretariat has enormous responsibilities aside from being the head of CST Department, as indicated hereunder:

i. Promote the objectives of the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021-2025(FCSSIP25).

ii. Conduct Culture Change Survey at regular interval on different aspects of the new Service Culture across the Service.

iii. Sensitize Civil Servants on the essential elements of FCSSIP25 reforms.

iv. Facilitate donors' support for the implementation of reforms in the Service.

v. Report on quarterly basis on MDAs' performance in respect of FCSSIP25 reforms through the Permanent Secretary, Service Policies and Strategies Office, OHCSF.

vi. Propagate the new Service Culture across the MDAs.

vii. Conduct research on empirical strategies for consolidating ongoing reforms in the Service.

viii. Deepen strategic partnership with relevant institutions in achieving the objectives of FCSSIP25.

ix. Coordinate the activities of FCSSIP 25 Secretariat in the OHCSF and overseeing the activities of the Project Management Teams (PMTs) of the six pillars of the FCSSIP25 [33].

The portfolio of the Director (CST) should be converted to position of a Director-General –Civil Service Transformation Office and should function as an agency of the OHCSF. This portfolio should be assigned to either a serving Director in the Service with immense knowledge on civil service administration reforms or a retiree with proven competencies in the management of reforms in the public sector.

### Weak coordination of World Bank's Partnership with the OHCSF on FCSSIP25

The Fiscal Governance and Institutions Projects (FGIP) which are being funded by the World Bank consists of the OHCSF's projects on FCSSIP25, among other of the Bank's intervention in the country's Public Sector's reforms. Specifically, the World Bank is funding the following OHCSF's FCSSIP25 projects:

i. Improving controls and efficiency in payroll expenditures covering the HR Module Rollout in 34 MDAs.

ii. Launch of Service wide content Services.

iii. Automation-IT Skills Upgrade.

iv. Appointment of Consultants on Performance Management System.

v. Service wide Training on Performance Management System.

The participation of the OHCSF at the weekly FGIP procurement meeting which holds every Thursday of the week at the instance of the World Bank was not well-coordinated because the CST Department was not adequately staffed with requisite competencies which should include a desk officer with Accounting and Procurement backgrounds to work with the Director (CST) on

World Bank-funded FCSSIP25 projects. The dearth of competent personnel in the CST Department affected timely project delivery on the FCSSIP25 reforms, thereby necessitating extension of project timelines by the World Bank. There is the need for the OHCSF to inject requisite competencies into the Department that is coordinating its World Bank-funded FGIP projects.

### **Lukewarm relationship between the OHCSF and the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC)**

Although the current HOS, Dr, Yemi-Esan, forged a superficially cordial relationship with the FCSC by extending her hand of fellowship to its Chairman, Dr. Bello Tukur Ngawa, a good number of the Commissioners at the FCSC were still apprehensive about the intention of FCSSIP25, especially with regards to the implementation of the new Performance Management System. In all the countries where the PMS was implemented, on-the-job assessment of personnel replaced promotion examinations, and this is what the Commissioners at the FCSC are tactically opposed to, because, for them, promotion examinations could be likened to capital projects, whose implementation assuredly yields enormous pecuniary benefits for them. Therefore, the implementation of PMS which the OHCSF is pursuing was viewed by the FCSC as an invitation for its Commissioners to commit economic suicide. Thus, as a way of pacifying and allaying the fears of the FCSC, the OHCSF had to change the narrative at a special validation workshop on PMS (which was attended by all the relevant stakeholders including the chairman of FCSC and the Commissioners), to a minimalist and non-provocative projection of PMS, as processes meant to replace the Annual Performance Evaluation Report with a more results-based assessment mechanism. However, the recent appointment of Professor Tunji Olaopa as the Chairman of FCSC and the appointment of new FCSC Commissioners have the prospects of intensifying reforms in the Federal Public Service and expanding the frontiers of the implementation of PMS Service-wide beyond the limited confines to which it was previously consigned. This expectation is anchored on the pro-reform pedigree of the new Chairman, FCSC. In addition, the frosty relationship between the OHCSF and the FCSC, expectedly, should improve in the light of the palpable convergence of interests between the new FCSC and the OHCSF regarding the FCSSIP25 reforms.

### **Lethargic and apathetic reception of FCSSIP25 by some MDAs**

Some MDAs are not enthusiastic about the FCSSIP25 reforms, and they are not doing much to popularize it among their staff. This should be blamed on the nonchalance of the Permanent Secretaries of those MDAs. The HOS is well-aware of this development through the quarterly tracking report she receives on the MDAs from FCSSIP25 Secretariat. Yet, the ongoing reforms being driven by the OHCSF require service-wide buy-in which FCSSIP currently lacks. To address this anomaly, steps must be taken to carryout service-wide sensitization of all the civil servants on the essence and

import of the FCSSIP25 reforms, beginning with those lethargic MDAs. The current situation in which the communication plan on FCSSIP25 is at the mercy of the MDAs is not result-oriented; the OHCSF should fund the Service-wide sensitization programme on FCSSIP25 as it has done for some other aspects of the reforms in order to get 100% buy-in of the MDAs as against the current 65% buy-in on the ongoing reforms, and it is when that is done that the MDAs can customize applicable aspects of the six pillars of the FCSSIP25 and facilitate the internalization of the new Service culture by their staff [34].

### **Conclusion**

The OHCSF is driving the Civil Service Administration Reforms in consonance with the roadmap espoused by the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021-2025 (FCSSIP-25). The FCSSIP provides strategic direction for the implementation of ongoing reforms in the Service. From the standpoint of its six priority areas, FCSSIP-25 is changing the Service in a significant way by bringing about the requisite transformation of the Service. The reforms in the Service are sustainable through the intensification of culture change advocacy anchored on the AMPLE core values of Accountability, Meritocracy, Professionalism, Loyalty and Efficiency which are the ethical and attitudinal components of FCSSIP-25 that would institutionalize the gains of the reforms. Overall, the progressive implementation of FCSSIP25 blueprint which contains diverse activities to be undertaken before the expiration of the plan cycle, will ensure the re-positioning and transformation of the Federal Civil Service to a world-class service by 2025, if all the identified constraints are promptly addressed.

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