Implementing a Single Window is no small task. Between 20 and 50 public authorities dealing with different aspects of border regulation must come onto a single platform and deliver services to industry and commerce. Political will is often said to be behind successful Single Window projects. In practice, political will translates into sustained routines of policy making to support ongoing efforts to implement a Single Window.
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1. Introduction

Although there is a universal acknowledgement of the need for policy reform regarding trade facilitation, practical measures have always been difficult to implement. It is true that there is virtually no incentive for governments to perpetuate slow, unreliable and inefficient processes at the border, and the political leadership strongly favours the construction of a robust cross-border regulatory infrastructure. However, it has not been easy for the leadership to create organizational structures committed to pursuing this aim over a sustained period. It requires a persistent policy push from different wings of government. It also calls for an engagement model with stakeholders, supported by a communication plan, that can sustain reforms by reaching out to diverse organizational cultures.

The leadership should promote inter-agency efforts to harmonize procedures, and the dismantling and re-alignment of existing systems. Programme managers should be assured of support through the ups and downs of the Single Window initiative. Very often, a simple statement of intent on the part of the political leadership is treated as a sign of political will. Just the desire at the highest level to launch a Single Window, or even a presidential decree, may not be enough. It must be backed by established policy routines that follow through with a well conceived reform agenda for action.

1.1 How is this Part Organized?

The Sections below describe the challenges and hurdles faced by policy leaders. They also use a policy development model to explain how and why a Single Window may get onto a government’s agenda for action. The penultimate Section outlines some key points to help maintain the policy momentum. This Part concludes that executive management from Customs and other border agencies must become acutely aware of the problems that may give rise to the demand for a Single Window, the policy areas that contribute to the development of the Single Window initiative, and the importance of stakeholder communication in achieving strategic objectives.

1.2 Relationship to Other Parts of the Compendium

Part I of Volume 1 discussed the concept of a Single Window environment; Part II of Volume 1 related that concept to the wide spectrum of Customs and border agency functions; Part III explained that the ‘Single Window’ must be pursued as a component of the holistic strategy for Customs and border services modernization. This Part is aimed at providing executive management and border agencies with an overview of the policy considerations in the development of Single Window solutions, enumerating the key factors that would foster purposeful discussion among key stakeholders and decision-makers. This Part also highlights the different openings or ‘policy windows’ that routinely arise. These policy windows help sustain the interest and attention of policy leaders in introducing a Single Window.
2. The ‘Single Window’ is a Policy Challenge

Implementing a Single Window is no small task. Between 20 and 50 public authorities dealing with different aspects of border regulation must come onto a single platform and deliver services to industry and commerce. Political will is often said to be behind successful Single Window projects. In practice, political will translates into sustained routines of policy making to support ongoing efforts to implement a Single Window.

2.1 Involvement of Multiple Agencies

The Single Window concept envisages a virtual interface between business and government. Different government departments have to play the role of service providers through this common interface. Issues discussed in a Single Window pass through various ministries and departments. A survey conducted by APEC (APEC Secretariat, 2007) on the Single Window revealed that there is a significant number of government agencies involved in regulatory processes for international trade. By their very nature, interdepartmental issues are very complex.

2.2 Battles for Turf

Owing to the role ascribed them in laws and regulations, cross-border regulatory agencies enjoy a monopoly presence at the border. Border agencies have a strong incentive to perpetuate their hold, and there is not enough incentive to co-ordinate. These organizations view their traditional areas of responsibility as their ‘turf’. This turf has tradition and prestige, and is not to be given up to another agency. Myths may surface about the Single Window being a power grabbing exercise by another department and raise further difficulties for the Single Window project.

The level of sophistication in the development and implementation of trade regulation may vary between countries. The geographical and political make-up of a country also has an impact on the relative importance of government departments and their functional portfolios. These variations make generalizations difficult in terms of the problems and solutions involving turf battles.

2.3 Linkages with Existing Programmes

As explained in the previous Part, the Single Window is in itself not a silver bullet. It is one of the many aspects of trade facilitation. The Single Window programme must somehow fit within the overall programme of Customs modernization, infrastructure upgrades, human resource development, integrity management and the broader development of trade regulation.

These issues are not just for Customs. All participating government agencies will face similar challenges with their respective projects and programmes. When a Single Window project is mooted, all departmental projects and programmes become the focus of attention, and programme/project managers come under pressure to explain their raison d’être. Business processes and regulatory procedures will be subject to scrutiny, and organizational cultures will be dissected and analysed.
In government, years of traditional incremental budgeting has led to a culture in which managers have routinely justified budgetary allocations. Existing programmes and budgets have tended to be self-perpetuating. Such an organizational culture works strongly in favour of the status quo.

The new approach would require each cross-border regulatory agency to review its existing programmes. The principles and assumptions based on current programmes will be challenged by the new, Single Window-based concepts of operations for cargo clearance. Likewise, the proposed architecture of information technology (IT) under a Single Window project would challenge not only current investment in IT, but also subject existing IT resources to new demands.

2.4 Long Gestation Periods

Single Window projects involve tasks that are complicated and time-consuming. The development of border infrastructure requires extensive co-ordination and high levels of investment. The procedure for making legislative changes is also prolonged. Business process analysis and data harmonization must be carried out by dedicated technical resources belonging to different government agencies and trade. These activities involve collaborative and consultative processes that need to be sustained through multiple iterations over an extended period.

Issues concerning physical infrastructure in and around ports and airports are not easy to resolve and may sometimes involve multiple agencies from federal, provincial and local governments. In the case of land borders, these issues call for international co-operation. Additionally, Single Window projects require significant budget outlays and complex financial arrangements, and are therefore subject to the oversight and control of elaborate procedures set out by government’s financial controllers.

2.5 The Avoidance Response

All of the issues cited above have the potential to divert the attention of the heads of cross-border regulatory agencies to other more ‘pressing’ matters needing immediate attention. In cross-border trade, there is no dearth of such ‘pressing’ problems and, in the face of many current challenges, the executive management has enough ‘justification’ not to take on yet another initiative, such as a Single Window. Executive managers are content to try to avoid that burden. Another reason for avoidance may be due to misconceptions about the coverage and size of the potential Single Window project, and the lack of appetite for such large projects within the executive leadership of a cross-border regulatory agency.

The points listed above often lead to a potential for loss of focus. This is the biggest policy management problem around the Single Window. This issue also presents a high threshold at entry. Part of the answer lies in the political processes leading to the formulation of the project. The political mandate, policy structures and routines, project governance and stakeholder engagement models, add up to a package that can help create conditions for sustaining the project.

To understand these processes, it is necessary to establish why and how a Single Window would get onto the government’s agenda for action. But getting it on the government’s agenda is not enough; it is also necessary to sustain the momentum of policy development. The following Sections examine the different types of discussions that could lead to the considerations for a Single Window.
3. Getting a ‘Single Window’ on the Agenda

Experts have suggested that there are three process streams (Kingdon, 2002) that must converge to bring about major policy initiatives. These streams are the problem stream, the policy stream and the political stream. They exist independently but come together at crucial moments to produce structured policy decisions. The following Subsections examine these three streams in the context of a Single Window, to locate the success factors in consensus building and the enactment of policies.

![Diagram of three streams model]

Figure 1: Adapting the ‘three streams’ model to policy development for introducing a Single Window.

3.1 The ‘Problem’ Stream

The ‘problem’ stream comprises identification and recognition of a set of related problems. This stream can emerge from organized events, published indicators, and reports (feedback) from the field. The problem stream is focused on providing a high level of clarity to all stakeholders about the issues involved.
Focus Events

Events that focus the government’s attention on the gap between existing conditions and the desired state often create this stream. There is no dearth of such incidents in the area of trade facilitation, as national and international bodies work ceaselessly to highlight the bottlenecks impeding hassle-free trade. Seminars, workshops, trade negotiations and investment road-shows, etc. fall into this category.

Indicators

Apart from focus events, key macroeconomic indicators are published by international organizations and often help highlight the problem areas. The annual ‘Doing Business’ report (“the World Bank Group, 2010”) ranks economies on their capacity to facilitate business, claiming to provide objective measures of business regulations and their enforcement. Part of the report, entitled ‘Trading Across Borders’, is dedicated to issues concerning trade facilitation. It has drawn the attention of the political executive all over the world. Governments are developing programmes that are aimed explicitly at overcoming the handicaps highlighted in this report.

The World Economic Forum produces a Global Competitiveness Index in its ‘Global Competitiveness Report’ (World Economic Forum, 2010). The Report assesses the ability of countries to provide high levels of prosperity, which in turn depends on levels of productivity achieved nationally. The Index determines a nation’s competitiveness and posits this as the key determinant in international trade. Defined as a set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity in a country, the competitiveness assessment is based on publicly available data and executive opinions. By including tariff levels, trade barriers and burdensome Customs procedures in its calculations, the Report draws the attention of policy makers to a nation’s ability to compete in global commerce.

The World Bank produces the Logistics Performance Index (Avris, Munstra, Ojala, Shepherd, and Saslavsky, 2010). This Index positions itself as “a comprehensive statement that has been created to help countries identify the challenges and opportunities they face in trade logistics performance.” It helps highlight problems in the areas of transportation, warehousing, cargo idle-time and border clearance, and payment infrastructure.

Transparency International produces a Global Corruption Perceptions Index, which deals with corruption in the public sector. Owing to their monopoly position, high public visibility at borders and to perceptions of corruption, cross-border regulatory agencies are particularly susceptible to being attacked on integrity issues.

The Single Window concept, will attract greater interest, among the policy elites, in the light of these publications.

Problems Reported from the Field (‘Feedback’)

The above indices and indicators contribute to a top-down flow of the ‘problem stream’. There are equally potent streams of information that arise from the grassroots and flow all the way to the top. The reporting of problems from the field contributes to this bottom-up flow of information. The private sector, through formal and informal consultative processes, provides the necessary input to the regulatory agencies on current regulatory problems, and there is a steady flow of reports from
operational managers to policy makers. Systematic efforts (such as the Time Release Study) also provide clear indicators of the time taken by various agencies.

Problems may sometimes be reported at the highest levels. Investors, both domestic and foreign, may complain about the time taken to clear goods and report the lack of a conducive environment as being the main obstacle to committing serious investment.

Each of these reports points to a series of problem areas, often involving both public and private sector players, institutions, regulations and solid infrastructure. These reports and globally published indices attract media attention and create public awareness. The public authorities concerned are put under pressure to explain why public performance is so poor. Stakeholders will use the statistics and indices as a means of supporting analysis and justifying the need for change.

3.2 The ‘Policy’ Stream

Governments establish policy programmes in different areas of governance, and various sections within the government are tasked with the formulation of strategic alternatives and proposals in their respective sectors. These organizational units give shape to new ideas or policy proposals that require the government’s attention. This stream involves the formulation of alternative decisions for the policy agenda. While the ‘problem’ stream is primarily factual and based on hard evidence on the ground, the ‘policy’ stream involves the intellectual analysis of policy options and alternatives. Experts suggest that big ideas exist in hidden clusters within government departments, external think-tanks, and industry research bodies. Some of the individuals within these organizations can step up their involvement and play the role of policy entrepreneurs (Kingdon). Policy entrepreneurs are thought leaders with “deep and abiding commitment to a particular change”.

The policy streams that are relevant to Single Window processes can be located in Customs modernization policy and in the process of setting up the vision, mission and goals for Customs. This is the only stream that is under the direct supervision and control of the Director General of Customs. Other policy streams are directly linked to the Single Window initiatives and involve career civil servants with years of professional expertise in diverse areas. Senior executives in Customs should actively seek such civil servants’ collaboration in Single Window projects and ask them for appropriate advice. Some of these areas of policy expertise that are linked to the Single Window are listed below.

Trade and Regionalization Policy

The Ministry of Trade usually directs government policy on trade facilitation and, in some countries, the Single Window squarely falls within its purview. Similarly, the related questions on regionalization and border trade policies are largely within the purview of the Trade, External Affairs Ministries and of the border police, where Customs is often the key facilitating department. Owing to their leading role in trade negotiations, Trade Ministries may sometimes find that they hold the brief for trade facilitation issues. The WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation has provided new policy impetus since it includes the Single Window as a measure which the Members of the WTO must endeavour to adopt.
Logistics Planning and Industrialization Policy

Trade logistics planning is a specialized area for which government requires expert input. In several economies, there are dedicated units that help governments identify industrial zones and locations that could be the source of goods for international trade. To keep up with the flow of goods, there is a need to plan for freight transportation infrastructure. Creation of industrial parks and transportation corridors calls for long-term investment of a high order.

Capacity planning for logistics infrastructure depends upon assumptions on cargo dwell-times (which is the flip side of release times), and the efficiencies of cargo terminal operations. These assumptions, usually classified under ‘port efficiency’, are significant factors in determining the operating capacities in place and can influence investment decisions. High cargo dwell-times, along with high variability in clearance times, have an impact on port facility planning. Policy planners that work on these policy issues may find that the Single Window is the solution to problems of ‘port efficiency’. For example, logistics specialists in APEC member economies have highlighted logistics chokepoints (see above). While a few of these chokepoints relate to infrastructure, nearly half of the chokepoints relate to Customs and cross-border formalities (APEC Secretariat, 2009).

APEC Supply-Chain Connectivity Framework Chokepoints

**Chokepoint 1:** Lack of transparency/awareness of the full scope of regulatory issues affecting logistics; lack of awareness and co-ordination among government agencies on policies affecting logistics sector; absence of single contact point or champion agency on logistics matters.

**Chokepoint 2:** Inefficient or inadequate transport infrastructure; lack of cross-border physical linkages (e.g. roads, bridges).

**Chokepoint 3:** Lack of capacity of local/regional logistics subproviders.

**Chokepoint 4:** Inefficient clearance of goods at Customs; lack of co-ordination among border agencies, especially relating to clearance of regulated goods ‘at the border’.

**Chokepoint 5:** Burdensome Customs documentation and other procedures (including for preferential trade).

**Chokepoint 6:** Underdeveloped multimodal transport capabilities; inefficient air, land, and multimodal connectivity.

**Chokepoint 7:** Variations in cross-border standards and regulations for movement of goods, services and business travellers.

**Chokepoint 8:** Lack of regional cross-border Customs-transit arrangements.
Builders of large-scale infrastructure, such as ports, airports, expressways and land-border stations, will inevitably look at the soft regulatory issues that support or hinder the steady flow of cargo. Development of a Single Window will probably emerge as a policy option that links the national logistics infrastructure with the overall national vision for competitiveness.

Human Resources and Civil Service Reform Policy

In many economies, the rationalization of the size of the civil service is a major area of concern for governments. Reduction in public expenditure arising from salaries and benefits to civil servants is a standing policy item for many governments and forms a critical area of long-term policy planning. Policy managers in this field prepare for occasions when governments agree on the need for wide-ranging human-resource restructuring programmes. The reasons for restructuring include downsizing the overall complement, or the creation of new government departments/agencies to better reflect the government’s strategic priorities.

Large scale redeployment of the workforce due to the merging of functions, or to the reallocation of business between organizational units, provides a significant opportunity to introduce the question of the Single Window.

Governments around the world have given high priority to electronic governance. It is well known that electronic governance helps improve the overall quality of governance. It raises the quality of life of citizens and reduces costs of doing business. Most countries have central units that manage the overall policy on e-governance. These units monitor the use of electronic means of delivery of services, investigate long-term policies and vision, and help formulate both short-term and long-term projects that may be taken up by individual government departments. This wing of the government also seeks to maintain alignment between projects run by different government departments, to ensure that services delivered through various programmes do not overlap and that each project ultimately delivers the government’s long-term vision.

E-Governance Policy

E-governance policy is not just about services provided by different government departments. It is also about technical standards to ensure interoperability and a common infrastructure for e-governance. Governments are keen to optimize infrastructure resources such as data centres, networking, hardware, software, contact centres and citizen service centres by enabling their shared use between government departments. This not only optimizes resources across government departments, but also fosters joined-up services. These are some of the themes for policy development on e-governance. The Single Window for international trade could easily be an area where managers of e-governance projects have a natural role to play.

It is essential for Customs executive management to maintain a direct link with experts in this area, to be aware of the master plans for e-governance services to businesses, and the government-wide standards that are being promoted. It is beneficial to collaborate with these experts as this supports the task of developing all national programmes on e-governance.
3.3 The ‘Political’ Stream

The political stream represents the visible clusters of support for an agenda. It is in this stream that the government’s agenda (the list of issues for decision) is formulated. Items of economic governance and industrial regulation have always been high on any government’s agenda. With the growth in the number of active trade lanes and the increase in the variety and volumes of trade, problems of cross-border regulation and the security of the supply chain have become very complicated. In today’s information-driven world, businesses expect the government to address these complex problems through faster and more efficient processing of information. Therefore, it is not difficult for political leaders to look to the ‘Single Window’ and put it on the agenda.

However, the Single Window is a facility that straddles traditional departmental boundaries. Each ministry/department is under separate political oversight, and is supported further by a network of organizations with diverse stakeholder interests. Each department will have its budgeted government programmes which civil servants administer. Interest groups create and maintain their respective hard-fought turfs.

The Single Window concept is not a ‘zero-sum game’. The key to resolving issues in the political stream is through negotiation and compromise, based on the principle of ‘Pareto optimality’, where one CBRA could ‘gain’ from a change in allocation of responsibilities and resources, even as other agencies do not lose theirs. The politics behind the distribution of business/authority arising from the Single Window initiative can be channelled through structured discussions. A matrix of responsibilities, accountabilities and levels of engagement for different ministries, departments and agencies can be used to untangle the realities of trade regulations at national frontiers.

Fighting for the leadership role is often about cornering resources and gaining organizational prestige and pride. It is also about the less obvious agenda to corner resources without assuming responsibility and accountability. The following matrix illustrates an example where the Trade Ministry is given the lead role. The model provides an opportunity to establish that responsibility, accountability and authority have to go hand in hand. The model can be used to assure individual agencies that their roles have not been, and will not be, taken away when the Single Window comes into being. For the sake of discussion, the functions of different agencies can be re-arranged experimentally to assess the impact. The changed situation would bring the focus back onto questions of competencies and the track record of the various participating organizations. Here, the perceived strategic roles and the areas of business assigned to each agency by the government also play a part. Change from the current position involves risks in terms of lost capacities, however, it creates opportunities in terms of organizational innovation.

The claims to be the ‘lead agency’ and to hold the position of authority should be matched by the willingness to assume responsibilities, and the readiness to be held accountable for outcomes. Track records in performance and competencies could help make the task of decision making easier. It will be borne out that ‘lead agency’ is a highly differentiated role, and that there is not much scope for exclusivity.
Recognition by the political leadership that there is fragmentation in terms of ownership and responsibility is half the solution. But unlike in the past, issues can no longer be pigeonholed and contained within individual agencies, as businesses are increasingly demanding better co-ordination among government agencies. In fact, businesses are expecting government agencies to harness information technology to deliver a seamless experience, and sooner or later the political leadership will have to pay attention to these demands.

Customs executive management could find itself facing the political fall-out from the uncoordinated handling of trade or security-related issues. Principally, the ‘political stream’ of the demand for a Single Window could emerge from persistent negative reporting or adverse publicity on cross-border procedures. The highlighted inefficiencies will attract more criticism when associated with a fragmented response from different government agencies, leading to even greater demands for transparency and co-ordination. Therefore, several strategic initiatives are under way around the world – especially in the industrialized economies – to establish co-ordinated border management and ‘joined-up’ government services.

The political stream can also build up in the course of other high-profile, government-wide initiatives. These include the major overhaul of fiscal policy, ‘stabilization’ of the external sector, sometimes supported by multilateral agencies, government ‘transformation’ projects, and industrial ‘corridor’ projects.
4. Maintaining the Policy Momentum

In the last Section, discussion centred around three independent streams that inform policy making processes. Policy decisions emerge when the three streams converge under the right conditions.

Government’s decision to implement a Single Window will first emerge as a policy decision. That decision could be the outcome of a strategic business case presented to the government. At this stage, the government’s in-principle approval of a Single Window solution is obtained.

The policy decision of the government will be followed by preparations for establishing the preferred project or projects that create the Single Window environment.

There will be a significant time gap between the policy decision and the identification of the Single Window project and its implementation. This period is crucial for rallying stakeholder support for
the strategic business case. The much-abused term ‘lack of political will’ is the inability of the political executive to ‘dirty its hands’ by thrashing out issues of responsibility and accountability, and getting all the agencies to be engaged effectively in their assigned roles.

The degree to which the leadership supports the execution of the preferred project is also a question of political will. It is at this stage that the political fall-out of the project will be felt, and the premise of the project will be called into question. This process needs to be carefully managed through a series of steps, as discussed below.

4.1 Create a Brand

Single Window projects are often known by a short title or an acronym, which in itself tends to become a brand. It is not enough to create a charter for the Single Window project – every project has a charter. What is necessary is to build a set of precepts that should be repeated like mantras in the course of meetings and discussions. Project titles and acronyms should not become brands by default. Brand creation should be the result of a professionally produced communication plan.

The Single Window brand can be built by putting together a set of ideas and images that embody the Single Window outcomes. For instance, the brand in the WCO Data Model project to promote the use of harmonized data for a Single Window is ‘Cross-border Transactions on the Fast Track’.

Attractive project branding can help draw and maintain the attention of stakeholders. The key ideas behind the Single Window can be captured in simple precepts that will act as guiding principles and help maintain continuity in the flow of ideas. Logos, slogans and other visual designs can equally contribute to the brand. The project precepts or principled statements are of immense value to the entire project as they help bring sanity to discussions.

4.2 Identify and Involve Subject-Matter Experts

The preceding Section explained that there were several policy drivers for the development of a Single Window project. Industrialization, trade logistics policy, human resource restructuring, Customs modernization, and e-governance were identified as the policy areas that have a bearing on the development of the Single window concept. Each of these sectors will have ‘thought leaders’ that can act as policy entrepreneurs. They can bring considerable professional expertise from their respective policy areas and are willing to articulate their position forcefully. Customs executive management is advised to cultivate such resources for achieving their strategic objectives. These experts can be separately or individually included in structures that help the organization receive timely inputs.

4.3 Maintain Visibility

Maintaining a visible presence for the Single Window concept is crucial. Public profile among the stakeholder communities is the product of a formally developed communication plan. The plan should include both internal and external stakeholders. The Single Window is a complex undertaking and therefore has a variety of interested parties for whom different packages need to be built. Communication activities must flow from this plan. Periodic seminars, workshops, awareness raising events, brochures, mailers and other media can be used to maintain a credible presence in the
minds of stakeholders. Giving presentations at international events, such as those organized by the World Customs Organization and the United Nations, is also a useful measure to attract the right kind of attention.

4.4 Tap into Existing Stakeholder Networks

Most Customs administrations follow a formal process of consultation with private and public sector stakeholders about trade facilitation and operations. As a result, Customs executives will have developed close interpersonal links with some influential stakeholder groups. Creating momentum for the Single Window will involve tapping these contacts for constructive engagement with the Single Window concept and the development and implementation of the preferred project.

Existing stakeholder groups, such electronic data interchange (EDI) working groups or port operations facilitation groups, could be involved. Different stakeholders will have different goals for a Single Window project and concrete proposals will arise from these varying aims. Getting stakeholders and decision makers to recognize the real problems is part of maintaining the policy momentum. Experts argue that the manner in which government identifies problems determines how they will ultimately be addressed.

Stakeholder communication for the express purpose of arriving at an executive mandate is a critical activity during the policy modelling phase. What happens at the early stages of stakeholder mobilization has a decisive impact on the entire policy process and its outcome.

As the United States has pursued its Single Window through the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has leveraged many avenues to successfully engage and address the needs of the trade community stakeholders, leading to a better product for all.

The Commercial Operations Advisory Committee (COAC) advises the Secretaries of the Department of the Treasury and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on the commercial operations of CBP and related DHS and Treasury functions. The Trade Support Network (TSN), a broad membership of brokers, importers, carriers, software developers, etc. representing all segments of the trade community, provides valuable feedback to CBP on any technical requirements to support trade modernization initiatives. The TSN is further divided, by trade processing topic, into a collection of committees, subcommittees, and cross-committee groups who provide tactical feedback on system functionality, recommend trade requirements, and collaborate with the ACE Business Office on areas such as legal and policy issues and business processes. A small subgroup of TSN members, known as the Trade Advisors and Technical Advisory Group, agree to undergo an extensive CBP background investigation, granting them clearance into technical and operational development, and thereby allowing yet another level of stakeholder input.

CBP makes parallel efforts with its internal stakeholders, via the Customs Support Network, which comprises active CBP personnel from across the country, further segmented into a change network of subject-matter experts, Field Readiness Co-ordinators and ACE Ambassadors. Subject-matter experts provide input from their respective areas, covering a wide scope which includes technical, policy and legal areas. The Field Readiness Co-ordinators and ACE Ambassadors make up a cohort of nearly 250+ CBP field personnel serving as local ACE experts, advocates, and points of contact. The Field Readiness Co-ordinators and ACE Ambassadors are CBP staff who have volunteered to take on collateral duties as ‘boots on the ground’ advocates for the ACE transition and as a first line of ACE support for their colleagues.

In addition to trade stakeholders, to leverage our Partner Government Agencies, CBP works closely with the International Trade Data System programme (currently comprising over 47 Partner Government Agencies) to identify and document needed system improvements to further facilitate business operations and further agency missions.
4.5 Seize Opportunities

Creating goodwill among stakeholders and seeking their support and involvement is an ongoing process. In the ordinary course of events, there will be occasions when support for the project has to be raised with those sufficiently empowered to take decisions. These opportunities could be regular formal meetings, seminars, workshops or speaking events. These events present an opportunity for the executive to promote the Single Window project.

5. Conclusion

Customs authorities the world over have to treat Single Window projects with the utmost priority as they face increasing demands from public and private sector stakeholders for improvements in trade facilitation and performance. Trade associations, governments and development partners, among others, will voice their requests and reasons for accelerating reform in trade procedures through the ‘Single Window’. It is, therefore, imperative for Customs administrations to understand why and how the Single Window can get onto the government’s agenda for action. Based on this understanding, Customs administrations should pursue a calibrated course of action to create a policy consensus in favour of the course chosen.

To convert broad understanding and in-depth knowledge of the Single Window concept into functioning systems, CBRAs go through processes that direct the thinking of the political leadership towards a Single Window initiative. This Part has discussed possible ways to maintain policy momentum and underscored the essence of the much misunderstood term ‘lack of political will’. Converting general support from the political leadership into sustainable policy routines is the key to success. This Part describes how the convergence of three independent process streams occurs.

(i) The problem stream deals with the process of imparting visibility and clarity to the challenges of the present, and the need to move to a different state of affairs, such as a Single Window solution. This stream comprises the following:
   a. Focus events, such as seminars, workshops and formal review meetings;
   b. Widely published international indices and rankings on trade facilitation and competitiveness; and
   c. Feedback and reports from the field.

(ii) The policy stream comprises ‘hidden clusters’ of policy within government, which by themselves would not be able to start a Single Window project but are centres for thought leadership. This Part identifies four significant clusters of expertise that are typically external to the Customs organization and which can have considerable influence on any Single Window initiative: trade and regionalization policy, logistics planning and industrialization policy, human resources and civil service reform policy, and e-governance policy.
The politics stream, which represents visible clusters of support for the agenda, is the actual process of getting the Single Window into government’s programme of action. The political problem of allocation of responsibilities and accountabilities between departments is discussed under this stream.

Whether or not the political structure in our Member countries allows for Customs to wield influence on the central policy issues, DGs and other executive managers will benefit from having a grasp of the strategic implications of a Single Window. Whatever the eventual outcome, Customs is usually the key stakeholder (or perhaps driver) of Single Window development and implementation. Senior Customs officials should prepare themselves to face up to the ‘thought leadership’ their governments will expect of them in discussions that will take place in the course of developing business cases for the Single Window.

Different stakeholders will have different goals from a Single Window project; from these goals, policy proposals will arise. In any given situation, Customs administrations will have to have the ability to draw the attention of the political executive to the key issues. Agenda setting is about getting decision-makers to recognize the real problems. Experts argue that the manner in which government recognizes problems determines how they will ultimately be addressed.

Stakeholder communication for arriving at an executive government mandate is a critical activity during the policy modelling phase. What happens in the early stages of stakeholder mobilization has a decisive impact on the entire policy process and its outcome.