

Week 5 - Lessons from Kuching, Sarawak, East Malaysia

“CRAFT of the Sarawak Digital Economy”

5th August 2019 | Tay Kok-Chin, Chairman, Smart Cities Network

*Kuching is the capital city of the state of Sarawak in East Malaysia. It is the Malay word for cat. Befittingly, the city is now spearheading the Digital Economy movement for the entire state, taking cue from the famous phrase coined by the Chinese reformation leader Deng Xiaoping in the late 70s, “it doesn't matter if a **cat** is **black** or **white** so long as it catches mice”.*

Below is the process in which they started their Digital Economy journey, where Smart City is one of the 7 focus sectors.

1) C – Start with a Conference

The Sarawak government launched the International Digital Economy Conference Sarawak (IDECS) in 2017, with the aim to propel the state into the competitive global digital economy.

2) R – Develop a Roadmap with the Sarawak Digital Economy Strategy 2018-2022.

Following the successful Conference, the government published a document on specific areas of focus for the Digital Economy.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57df44c115d5dba740ca7fd4/t/5a323260e4966b4841bda4fa/1513239179277/DES_Booklet.pdf

3) A – Strategic Action of the Sarawak Digital Economy Transformation

The Roadmap outlines a total of 47 Strategic Actions – 29 for the Economic Sectors, and 18 for Enablers.

4) F – Forging Global and Regional Partnerships

At the recent IDECS 2019, the Sarawak Government signed several Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), including with Smart Cities Network. The plan is to establish Centres of Excellence for the various sectors.

5) T – Talent Development and Digital Inclusivity of the Community

A critical success factor to develop the Sarawak Digital Economy is the development of talent and the adoption of technologies and innovations by the community.