Qatar's Communications Regulatory Authority Contribution to GSR-23:

Regulatory and Economic Incentives for an Inclusive Sustainable Digital Future

Defining regulatory and economic incentives to stimulate the deployment of sustainable digital infrastructure, especially in rural and isolated areas

Consumer Protection Regulation - Customer Rights to Be Connected:

The Communications Regulatory Authority in Qatar (CRA) has developed a new consumer protection regulatory framework, which is currently under consultation and set to be released soon. It includes the right of customers to be connected, which is important for promoting sustainable digital infrastructure deployment, especially in rural and isolated areas, for various reasons:

1. Promoting Universal Access Obligations: This means that telecom service providers are required to provide services to all, irrespective of their location, ensuring that everyone has access to essential broadband services.
2. Improving Competition: This can encourage service providers to invest in infrastructure (Network, Platform, and Applications) and develop new services, leading to the deployment of sustainable digital infrastructure.
3. Bridging the Digital Divide: Access to broadband services is essential for bridging the digital divide, particularly in rural and isolated areas. By guaranteeing a customer's right to access broadband services, consumer protection regulation can help promote equal access to essential digital services, improving the quality of life for people in these areas.

Infrastructure Sharing

Qatar's Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) promotes sharing of telecom infrastructure among providers through the issued "Regulation for the Construction and Installation of Radio Communication Stations" and "Access to Civil Infrastructure Regulation". This helps to cut costs of deploying, resolve issues of government and private land availability for site usage, improve efficiency, and encourage competition, particularly in underserved areas. Mandating access and sharing of civil infrastructure has demonstrated the benefits of infrastructure sharing (ducts, masts, towers, etc.) within major "developments" (Lusail, Msheireb, Barwa City, Energy City), and paved the ground for wholesale access obligations on dominant service providers, leading to national wide sharing of civil infrastructure required to build and operate telecom networks and stimulating the deployment of sustainable digital infrastructure

Network Neutrality Regulation:

As part of its 2020-2024 strategy, the CRA has been developing network neutrality regulations to maintain an open and accessible internet for everyone, regardless of location or economic status. This regulation can encourage fair competition, innovation, and consumer choice, ultimately driving the deployment of sustainable digital infrastructure.

Public-Private Partnerships

Qatar promotes public-private partnerships through Law No. (12) of 2020. The law allows government entities and private sector organizations to partner for implementing and financing assets and services. The goal is to diversify the

government sector and increase private sector participation while promoting economic activity and facilitating the transfer of technology and innovation from the private sector to public services. This collaboration is expected to create investment opportunities and drive economic growth in Qatar.

Identifying the right incentives required to ensure the introduction of emerging ICT technologies and business models

Cloud Policy Framework:

CRA Qatar has developed a comprehensive cloud policy to promote the adoption of cloud computing in the country. The policy is aimed at fostering innovation, improving efficiency, enhancing security in the delivery of digital services and helping to reduce uncertainty, and promoting investment in emerging technologies. The key elements of the cloud policy framework in Qatar are as follows:

1. Cloud-First Approach: The policy mandates a "cloud-first" approach for all government agencies, which means that cloud solutions should be the default option for all new digital services and systems.
2. Cloud Security: Emphasizes the importance of ensuring the security of cloud services and systems.
3. Interoperability: Encourages the use of open standards and promotes interoperability between different cloud services and systems, to ensure that data can be easily shared and integrated.
4. Environmental Sustainability: Promoting the adoption of sustainable practices in the cloud computing industry in Qatar. Reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.
5. Accessibility and Digital Inclusion: The policy promotes accessibility and digital inclusion, aiming to ensure that all have access to digital services and that no one is left behind in the digital age.

National Artificial Intelligence Strategy and AI Committee:

In 2019, Qatar launched its National AI Strategy to enhance public services, drive economic growth, and secure its strategic future. The strategy's six pillars include Talent, Data Access, Employment, Wealth Creation, AI+X Future (Where AI is integrated into various industries and domains, creating new opportunities for innovation and growth), and Thought Leadership in AI Ethics. And has established an Artificial Intelligence Committee to coordinate with relevant authorities and develop mechanisms for implementing the national AI strategy. The committee also oversees national programs and initiatives related to AI, supports emerging companies and scientific research, and collaborates with international organizations and competent third parties to stay updated on the latest developments in the field of AI.

National Blockchain Blueprint:

The Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) in collaboration with Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and Qatar University (QU) has created a regulatory foundation for blockchain and enabled a supportive environment for creativity and innovation. This blueprint provides a clear framework for the adoption and regulation of blockchain technology at the national level, which can help to attract investment and promote the growth of the blockchain industry in Qatar.