

E-GOVERNANCE STRATEGY IN INDIA

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1. Introduction

The term governance comes from an ancient Greek word, kebernon, which means to steer. Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development. It is a set of the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organization. E-governance is defined as the application of information and communication technologies to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational and transactional exchanges within government, between government and government agencies of national, state, municipal and local levels, citizen and businesses, and to empower citizens through access and use of information.

2. Delivery models and activities of e-governance

1. Government to citizen (G2C): G2C will aim at connecting citizens to government by talking to citizens and supporting accountability, by listening to citizens and supporting democracy, and by improving public services. It will involve better services to the citizens through single point delivery mechanism and will involve the following areas:

E-citizen: Under e-citizen, integrated service centres will be created. The purpose of these centres will be to take over the various customer services in due course. It will offer services like issue of certificates, ration cards, passports, payment of bills and taxes, etc. These centres will become one-stop government shops for delivery of all services.

E-transport: The transport aspects that can be easily e-governed include registration of motor vehicles, issue of driving licenses, issue of plying permissions, tax and fee collection through cash and bank challans and control of pollution.

E-registration: E-governing the registration and transfer of the properties and stamp duty to be paid there on will bring substantial reduction of paper work and reduce the duplicating of entries. Further, the transparency in work will increase and the overall time of process registration will reduce.

2. Consumer to government (C2G): C2G will mainly constitute the areas where the citizen interacts with the government. It will include areas like election when citizens vote for the government; census where he provides information about himself to the government; and taxation where he is paying taxes to the government.

E-democracy: The e-democracy is an effort to change the role of citizen from passive information giving to active citizen involvement. In an e-democracy the government will be informing the citizen, representing the citizen, encouraging the citizen to vote, consulting the citizen and engaging the citizen in the governance. Taking the citizens input about the various government policies by organizing an e-debate will further strengthen the e-democracy.

3. Government to government (G2G): This can also be referred to as e-administration. It involves improving government processes by cutting costs, by managing performance, by making strategic connections within government, and by creating empowerment.

E-secretariat: Secretariat which is the seat of power has a lot of valuable information regarding the functioning of the state. The cross-linking of various departments and exchange of information amongst various components will simplify the process of governance.

E-police: E-police will help to build citizen confidence. There will be two databases: One of police personnel and the other of criminals. The database of personnel will have the records of their current and previous postings. This will help to track policemen specialized in certain geographical regions and skills. The second database will be of criminals. This database has to be upgraded to national database for its total utility. By just typing the name of a criminal, a police officer will be able to know the details of his past activities, including his modus operandi and the area of operation. Further, a database like this will help tap the criminals easily, for all the police stations will have simultaneous access to their record.

E-court: The pending court cases in India have brought the legal system to a halt. IT can transform the system and bring in the court cases to a level of zero dependency. Creating a database of cases can do the same. In fact such a system will help to avoid all the appeals to High Courts and Supreme Court, for the judges can consider the appeals from an intranet wherein the case remains in the same district court but the higher court gives their decision online based on the recorded facts of the case.

State wide networks: This will involve linking all the departments of the government with various district headquarters and the state capital, facilitating the flow of information between the various state departments and its constituents. Here, various blocks will be linked to district headquarters, district headquarters to state headquarters and state headquarters to the national capital.

4. Government to business (G2B): E-taxation will constitute the various services a business house needs to get from the government, which includes getting licenses, etc. In a similar scenario, it can also flow from a business house to the government as in the case of procurements, from such business houses by the government.

3. Priorities and objectives

For e-governance to succeed in India, e-readiness must be built. This means strengthening infrastructural inadequacies, reducing the barriers to e-governance, and strengthening the drivers to e-governance. The priority for is therefore to build e-readiness in seven areas: infrastructure, institutions, laws, leadership and commitment, human capacities, technology, and data systems. The specific objectives are:

1. To develop high-level awareness and commitment that will carry forward e-governance for development.
2. To develop the capacities necessary to address e-governance strategically.
3. To develop the human and data infrastructure necessary for e-governance.
4. To implement pilot projects

4. E-governance: Major issues in India

Funding: Funding is the foremost issue in e-governance initiatives. The projects that are part of the e-governance initiatives need to be funded either through the government sector or through the private sector. For the private sector to step into the funding activity their commercial interests needs to be ensured.

Management of change: The delivery of government services through the electronic media including EDI, internet and other IT based technologies would necessitate procedural and legal changes in the decision and delivery making processes. It demands fundamental changes in government decision management. The employees need to be delegated more authority.

Privacy: The privacy of the citizen also needs to be ensured while addressing the issues. Whenever a citizen gets into any transaction with a government agency, he shells out lot of personal information, which can be misused by the private sector. Thus, the citizen should be ensured that the information flow would pass through reliable channels and seamless network.

Authentication: Secured ways of transactions for the government services are another issue of concern. The identity of citizens requesting services needs to be verified before they access or use the services. Here, digital signature will play an important role in delivery of such services. But,

the infrastructure needed to support them is very expensive and requires constant maintenance. Hence, a pertinent need still survives, compelling the authorities to ensure the authenticity in their transactions thereby gaining absolute trust and confidence of the citizen.

Delivery of services: The ability of citizens to access these services is another major issue. Since the penetration of PCs and internet is very low in the country, some framework needs to be worked out for delivery of the e-services that would be delivering those services? Could we have something like a single stop shop of the government? A proposed mechanism is delivery of the same through the government post offices, for they already have the brick and mortar support and the most extensive network in the nation.

Technology issues: A number of organizations, both in the centre and the states, have taken commendable initiatives to develop hardware and software platforms to address the challenges offered by e-governance. At the central level in particular, the C-DAC, CMC and a number of others are noteworthy. The e-governance initiative would have to address these technology issues/objectives by identifying the appropriate hardware platforms and software application packages for cost-effective delivery of public services.

5. E-governance: Acceptability in India

The policy-makers in India tend to justify the adoption and expansion of e-governance on the grounds that it costs less, reduces waste, promotes transparency, eliminates corruption, generates possibilities to resolve rural poverty and inequality, and guarantees a better future for citizens. Indian government has taken major initiatives to setup institutions for making policy, control and account deployment of e-governance which will provide effective and efficient services.

1. Freedom of information bill that requires all public authorities to maintain information and records, and appoint public information officers to assist citizens in gaining access to such information.
2. Ministry of Information Technology plays a crucial role in facilitating e-governance by reinforcing knowledge based enterprises, encouraging coordination among users, adopting procedures based on international standards, promoting the internet and introducing it education.
3. The Government has also decided to establish a National Institute of Smart Government in order to enhance capacity-building in e-governance at all administrative levels.
4. National e-Governance Projects make all government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man.

6. Conclusion

In spite of poor infrastructure, poverty, illiteracy, language dominance and all the other reasons, India has number of award winning e-governance projects. Effective promotion schemes by the Indian government will also a boosting factor to provide quality services to their citizens, which means there is huge potential for the development of e-governance in various sectors. According to Skoch Consultancy, New Delhi, 81 per cent citizens report reduction in corruption, 95 per cent find cost of e-governance affordable and 78 per cent favours fast of delivery of services. Thus, from the above discussions, we conclude that a long-term and a short-term strategy for e-governance implementation is the need of the hour. For successful implementation, standards, infrastructure, legislations, strategy all needs to be in place. It also requires establishment of various institutions under the Ministry of Information Technology. It requires a global vision and local implementation. Above all, it requires e-readiness in the minds of citizens and the government employees.

7. Reference

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