

e-Governance

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e-Governance *democratizes information and makes the government citizen-centric through smart use of digital technologies.* In India, the state of Andhra Pradesh is held out as a role model for such a transformation toward e-governance.

The **benefits** of e-governance are -

- > Citizens and business are able to *conveniently interact* with the government
- > The government operates with *fairness and transparency* within a rule-based framework
- > *Efficiencies* introduced through e-governance could help enhance revenue and / or lower costs in the economy
- > The information dissemination and interaction capabilities of the e-Governance system come in handy in *disaster management*

A few **preliminaries** that determine e-readiness, and thereby the success of e-governance are -

- > *e-oriented Human capital* including citizens and business as users of the government's services, as well as employees of the government who would be providing the services.
- > *Transparency-oriented political establishment* that is comfortable with rule-based governance and information dissemination. *An internal champion within the government would be a critical factor that would determine the ease and pace of transformation.*
- > *Legislative framework* including information laws and cyber laws that democratize information, empower citizens and ensure that the digital world operates in an orderly manner.
- > *Reliable and inexpensive operating structures* including telecom infrastructure, data exchange platforms, computers and other access devices, public access infrastructure, certifying authorities etc.

The **process** of transforming governance into an electronic format generally covers the following stages -

- > *Vision* – This is the “big picture” of where the government sees itself in a 10 year horizon.
- > *Strategy Plan* to realize this vision. Apart from providing for the preliminaries mentioned above, the plan sets the pace for the transformation. Critical elements of the plan are -
 - Technology plan, which would include data formats, software platforms, hardware equipment and networking infrastructure to ensure easy and reliable access across devices and languages.
 - Knowledge Management Plan, for which various generic models exist, such as broadcasting model, critical flow model, comparative analysis model, lobbying model and interactive service model. The objective would be to benefit from e-governance while respecting privacy considerations.

- Change Management Plan, which would need to consider all physical and behavioural aspects for seamless transition into e-governance. The approach normally is to make role models out of high-impact e-ready areas, and generate the momentum to quickly transform other areas.
- Financial Plan, including government and private finances, to fuel the project that could easily extend to 7 – 10 years.

> *Implementation* – Once the plan is in place, the government can proceed to set up the structure and systems for internet enabled *Government to Citizen* (G2C – various services of the government), *Government to Government* (G2G – internal processes of the government), *Government to Business* (G2B – commercial taxes, procurement by government etc.) and *Government to External* (G2X – visas for outsiders visiting the country) interactions.

A common mistake is to replicate the current government processes, but in a technology environment. A good business process re-structuring exercise could yield opportunities for the government to deliver superior value to its constituents.

e-governance is not a destination but a process, aimed at continuous change to leverage on technology and infrastructure. A self-perpetuating process of transformation would be key to manifold-rewards from the steep time and money commitments inherent to any e-governance project.