

CeG to make public services more customer-centric, roll out new services

The Centre for e-Governance (CeG) is a society under the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms (e-Governance). CeG was formed to serve as the nodal agency to implement common IT infrastructure across all departments of the Government and also provide support in terms of IT and e-Governance consulting. Dr. Ratan U. Kelkar, CEO of the centre speaks in an interview. Excerpts.

Could you briefly give an overview of the activities undertaken by the Karnataka E-governance department?

CeG Operates the Core Infrastructure like the State Data Centre, the State Wide Area Network, the Secretariat Local Area Network and so on, common to all departments. It has also implemented common enterprise-wide applications like the e-procurement and human resource management system that are used by all departments. Citizen Service Centres like Bangalore-One and Karnataka-One also come under this department's purview. CeG also provides e-Governance Training, Advisory and Consultation Services to departments.

What are some of the key initiatives that have been unveiled in recent times?

We recently launched the MobileOne platform across Karnataka. It has the Unique distinction of being certified as India's first and the world's largest multi-mode mobile governance platform. It is a unified mobile platform for delivery of G2C and G2B services of the Government of Karnataka along with a host of citizen-centric privates service through an open platform, which can accept any service and is thus future-proof. These anytime, anywhere, anyhow services are available 24 x 7 x 365 days, can be accessed from anywhere in India on any mobile device over any network by anyone who wishes to use them.

The aim is to provide these services to people in both urban and rural Karnataka by utilizing the reach of mobile connectivity and the power of the mobile device to develop/on-board applications and deliver services to foster inclusive development in the state of Karnataka. MobileOne hopes to transform delivery of public services, foster innovation, promote entrepreneurial culture, provide a self-sustaining platform for multi-channel and ubiquitous access to government as well as value added services to the people in Karnataka.

It has been designed to inclusive and not leave out any section of society, regardless of the socio-economic strata they might belong to. The platform does not expect the citizens to own mid-to- high-end smart phones or have expensive data plans to access the plans to access the various services. Many of the G2C services are available over SMS, USSD and IVR channels. More services are being planned to be delivered over these channels so as to increase the reach ability, availability.

What is being done to ensure that e-Governance is more robust, dynamic and people-friendly?

We are working to ensure that technical initiatives go hand-in-glove with appropriate policy changes and process re-engineering so that they become more effective also become more user friendly, which in turn will drive adoption by citizens and enable access to the government, especially in the rural sectors.

Going forward, department should desist from insisting upon submission of hard copy document/certificates etc. Where such information is already available in an electronic format, perhaps with another department For instance, a copy of the passport or birth certificate, ect. Departments can get these documents online (provided that the various departments have already been seamlessly integrated) instead of asking the citizen to submit copies, thereby making access to such services over mobile easier and making the user experience more comfortable.

MobileOne, for example, aims to bring equality in service delivery to bridge socio-economic divides, language barriers, and literacy gaps. The initiative enables a two-way dialogue with citizens allowing for more transparency, accountability in addition to faster resolution of grievances. By empowering citizens to be able to their utility bills, property tax, track their passport applications, submit grievances, all on the go, MobileOne is revolutionizing governance in the 21st century and making it accessible to everyone in Karnataka through a mobile phone. Since the platform is device-agnostic, everyone from a farmer with a basic phone to a CEO with a high-end Smartphone will be able to it with equal ease.

We are certain that technology will be instrumental in serving as the bridge between government and citizens. With this, we hope to address issues, large and small, to alleviate the concerns of citizens and help them feel safer. Moreover, the need of the day is to have a customer-centric approach in the provision of public services. For example, live feeds from CCTVs would be invaluable in monitoring safety on the streets as well as managing traffic in a more effective way.

Could you shed light on a few upcoming initiatives?

A number of e-governance initiative are in the pipeline. We plan to upgrade the Karnataka State Wide Area Network to increase the bandwidth and security of network provided to the Government offices and introduce redundancy in the network so that there is higher availability.

HRMS 2.0, an /upgraded version of the State's Human Resource Management System is also in the works. A new and improved e-Procurement portal also going to be released. An enhanced Karnataka Resident Data Hub v 4.0 is expected to be rolled out 2015-16. The e-District and Citizen Service Centre initiatives are expected to be rolled out throughout the State by 2015-16, with 50 new Citizen Service Centres planned to be opened under Karnataka One Scheme in tier-II cities of the State. New e-Governance Policy will be formulated for consolidation of different departments by using new technology. A new State

Data Centre will be established at Suvarna Soudh, Belgaum, for the Purpose of disaster recovery and business continuity. A version of the MobileOne smart client on windows and Blackberry platforms is in the pipeline. More departments and citizen oriented third party service providers will be on boarded on to MobileOne.

An Innovation Centre is envisioned through which more innovative mobile application shall be designed and developed, specifically for the MobileOne platform. Regular hackathon events would be held to encourage the developer community at large to develop citizen-centric mobile applications to be made available on MobileOne. A "Government of Karnataka Mobile App Store" is also on the cards, where the citizen can find and download all the Government-related apps easily.

What's the vision of the department?

The vision is to provide government services to people in both urban and rural Karnataka by the application and use of a range of modern information and communication technology (ICT) such as the internet, local area networks, mobiles etc. To improve effectiveness, efficiency of service delivery and to promote democracy. Through e-governance, government service will be made available to citizen in a convenient efficient and transparent manner.