

BRIEFING NOTE: MyGov India

mygov.in

Method

Online brainstorming, Prize-Backed Challenges

Participatory Task

Ideas, Opinions, Actions

Owner: National Informatics Center, Government of India

Location: India

Years in Operation: 2014-present

Implementation Level: National

Platforms: Web, Mobile

How does it work?

MyGov India is the Government of India's official citizen engagement platform and is used by its ministries and agencies to solicit ideas from the Indian public to solve public problems. Each ministry or agency can create participation opportunities that range from identifying solutions to serious problems -such as identifying opportunities to increase non-fare revenue for Indian Railways - to tapping into the creativity of members of the public to design a new app for the Prime Minister.

MyGov India divides participation opportunities into three categories: Do, Discuss, and Poll.

1. Poll - Ministries can post opinion polls and surveys about topics ranging from the naming of government programs, to the design of government apps, websites, and logos. Many polls are also used for priority-setting tasks around "Smart Cities" initiatives and area-based development. For instance, one poll allowed residents to vote for which area of the city of Ghaziabad should be selected for area-based development as a Smart City. For the duration of the polling period (determined by the creator of the poll), registered users can vote in the poll or survey; the platform shows users the results of the poll after they have cast their vote.

2. Discuss - Users respond to prompts or questions posed by Ministries, or by the central Government of India, on topics such as reducing corruption through technology, celebrating the 150th birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, or building parks in Varanasi City. Additionally, in the lead up to Prime Minister Modi's monthly national radio address (called Mann Ki Baat), users are asked to submit topics and key themes about important issues.
3. Do - The Do section presents opportunities for engagement that go beyond simply suggesting ideas or providing opinions and presents a chance for users to undertake tasks. While a large majority of the tasks are contests for designing slogans, posters or logos, there are also innovation contests involving substantive policy goals. One example was the 2018 Rurban (rural-urban) innovation challenge which invited startups or individuals to propose projects for implementation around 8 focus areas including: sanitation, road safety, healthcare services and digital literacy in villages, among others. By successfully completing tasks, users earn "activity points" and accumulate "hours" of participation, which are displayed on their profile to track their engagement on the site.

MyGov works with ministries to identify an idea for the engagement initiative and publish it on the platform, and also helps with both designing the outreach initiative and analyzing responses before passing them to the participating ministry. How submissions are processed after MyGov turns them over to the participating ministry differs from division to division. If the ministry implements a user's idea, they must inform MyGov, who in turn informs the user.

What are the outcomes?

With over 7.8 million registered users, MyGov is one of the largest CrowdLaw projects in the world. As of March 2019, the platform boasted 223,000 submissions across 808 tasks, and 3.9 million comments across 799 discussions since the platform's creation. Among the most notable features are the automatic translation tools used to transcribe and translate from the country's many diverse languages and an algorithm used to analyze and prioritize comments. Going forward, MyGov plans to include support for regional languages and further explore the use of voice-to-text conversion to enable people to participate by phone.

Additionally, important policy decisions have been shaped by submissions to the MyGov platform. For example, the Indian Railways budget of 2016 included 15 citizen ideas from MyGov. Yet, MyGov has been most popular for creative design contests such as the logo design for the “Clean India” mission (Swacch Bharat), and for soliciting topics which the Prime Minister should address in his monthly radio address to the nation.

What does it cost?

For the 2016-2017 financial year, the MyGov division of the Digital India Corporation reported a total expenditure of Rs. 1,066,194,458 (\$14,480,499 USD). MyGov is funded in full by a yearly grant-in-aid from India’s Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. Nearly 90% of this budget -- Rs. 938,544,82 -- was spent on administrative expenses. The vast majority (over 96%) of the administrative expenditures went towards promoting the MyGov platform through advertising and conferences; only Rs. 6,033,936 -- or 0.6% of MyGov’s total budget -- was spent on direct maintenance and data storage related to website operations (Digital India Corporation, 2017).

What are the benefits?

- Extensive marketing and publicity using multiple modes of communication, especially social media, has led to high levels of engagement.
- Mixing “fun” and “serious” tasks, such as logo design with policy proposals, keeps more diverse audiences engaged.
- “Gamification” and contests boost participation.
- The MyGov India staff supports ministries in creating engagement opportunities and requires agencies to respond, explicitly communicating how they used public feedback.

What are the risks?

- While the site enables engagement, it does not commit the government to respond nor guarantee any legislative outcomes. The lack of definite outcome risks reducing the impact of the project.
- Even though policy discussions are held on myGov, Ministries are not compelled to respond, depressing participation.
- Posting vague problem statements reduces the quality of submissions and increases

the workload for the team responsible for filtering the submissions and selecting the best ones.

For more information, please contact: crowdlaw@thegovlab.org

Sources:

- MyGov India Blog, *"15 Citizen Ideas That Shaped the Rail Budget 2016-17"*.
- Available online at <https://blog.mygov.in/15-citizen-ideas-that-shaped-the-rail-budget-2016-17/>