

Department of Information Technology

Framework for Citizen Engagement in NeGP

Contents

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
I. Background	4
II. Current Scenario	5
III. Citizen Engagement	6
3.1 What is Citizen Engagement	6
3.2 Need for Citizen Engagement	6
3.3 Levels of Engagement	7
3.4 Mechanism for Citizen Engagement	7
3.5 Challenges in Citizen Engagement	8
IV. Existing Citizen Engagement Models & Mechanisms	10
4.1 India	10
4.2 Other Countries.....	11
V. Citizen Engagement in e-Governance Projects	15
5.1 Engagement Framework: Process of Citizen Engagement	15
VI. Way Forward	22

Framework for Citizen Engagement in NeGP

Executive Summary

Citizen Engagement is an essential element of democracy and the public institutions must undertake all steps to achieve credible public participation. However, in a country as vast and as complex as India, active citizen engagement in policy making has been challenging and minimal. Today, technology offers a unique opportunity to engage with citizens in real time to make policy making citizen centric. The National e-Governance Plan with citizen centrality at its core represents that paradigm shift in policy making. In order to ensure that citizen engagement is deliberate, meaningful, and institutionalised, a citizen engagement framework is being proposed which aims to achieve the abovementioned.

Citizen engagement or public participation is not a new concept and has been exercised in varied degrees across the world and even in India. This document illustrates some examples from India and across the world. It also proposes to go beyond what currently exists and institutionalise citizen engagement in e-Government projects. The definition of citizen engagement proposed in the document goes beyond conventional public consultation by enabling citizens to do more than simply voice an opinion – it includes their participation in the deliberation process leading to decisions.

The need for citizen engagement is clearly highlighted in the findings of the various impact assessments undertaken by DIT. The assessments show that the impact of the projects is determined by the level of consultation with service seekers because it is only after such a process of consultation that the project design can yield optimal results. Public engagement is also a process for educating decision makers (in parliament and government) about important social issues and citizens' pressing needs that parliaments and governments must address. Public participation also enhances citizen ownership of development processes, increases the sense of citizenship, and results in better implementation of development programs.

In an ideal scenario, the citizens may collaborate from conceptualisation to implementation of the project and may even be empowered to reject or alter the project design at a later stage of the project. However, in real life, project managers must define the intervention points and degree of engagement. The document proposes the process and recommends points of interventions and methodologies that may be used for such engagements.

Finally the document recommends the following:

- Wider stakeholder consultation for refinement of framework
- Creation of Citizen Engagement Fund
- Creation of Citizen Engagement Toolkit for e-Government projects; and
- Piloting of the proposed framework in NeGP MMPs

I. Background

India is a democratic republic and the philosophy of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity are enshrined in its constitution. The democratic principles of the country flow from the Preamble itself. Democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Effectively this means that the Government is elected by the people, it is responsible and accountable to the people. One of the ways of ensuring responsibility and accountability is by actively engaging with the public while making policies that impact them directly. However, since independence public participation in policy making has been minimal. Governance was process and procedure centric and generally a top down approach was used for policy making. In addition, given the vast size of the country, federal structure of governance with over 240,000+ local governance institutions and large population coupled with its other complexities viz multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual society, did not lend itself amenable to large scale public participation in policy making. Efforts were however made at several levels including creation of Panchayati Raj institutions, seeking civil society inputs in implementation of large projects etc. but it was very difficult to consult all stakeholders in any given project.

In the early 1990s, two changes were sweeping across the world – the focus on good governance with increasing public and private sector participation and Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and internet – technologies that potentially could connect any and everyone in real time. The concept of e-Government or e-Governance was born through the amalgamation of these two. E-Governance marked a paradigm shift in the philosophy of governance – citizen centricity instead of process centricity and ICTs enable large scale public participation.

India also did not remain untouched from the changes sweeping across the world. Several e-Governance projects across the country were being implemented that focussed on improved public service delivery, bringing greater transparency in government processes and ensuring more effective accountability. The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), based on the learning from these projects was approved in May 2006 and comprises of 27 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) and 8 Components with a vision to 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. The cornerstones of NeGP are citizen centricity, identification of services & service levels, centralised planning & decentralised implementation and Public Private Partnership (PPP).

II. Current Scenario

Since its inception, significant progress has been made in the delivery of a no. of services envisaged under NeGP. Of the 1100 services originally identified, today over 600 services are available in some form across the country. A few projects such as MCA21, Pensions, Central Excise, India Portal and Income Tax have even completed their originally envisaged deliverables. The success of these projects may be adjudged on the basis of uptake of services e.g. in MCA21, since its launch in 2006, over 102 lakh documents have been filed electronically, on Income Tax portal over 52 Lakh return were filed in 2009-10.

However, despite such successes, the impact studies undertaken have shown that while service seekers overwhelmingly prefer a technology enabled model of service delivery, while such a model may have had some impact on improving the outreach of services, it has had achieved a very little impact on reducing the cost of actual service, quality of services rendered and overall governance issues such as corruption and accountability. The studies have indicated a multitude of reasons for the same:

Limited Access to Broadband Internet & Power Shortage: While using either the web based or CSC based model, because of limited access to internet bandwidth (only 10 Mn broadband subscribers and limited internet reach in rural areas), and power issues, the outreach is limited to large towns/talukas/Tehsils.

Limited Computerisation of G2C Services: Even where CSCs are operating in villages with broadband connectivity & power back ups, the availability of G2C services is minimal due to limited computerisation of G2C services

High Cost of accessing Services: The cost of service comprises of many factors including no. of trips, waiting period, corruption, opportunity cost etc. Since most services are not available at the doorstep of the citizen, service seeker has to often make multiple trips, to access services. These may vary anything between 2-5 trips/services. Although it was found that the no. of trips was invariably reduced by at least one, no other significant gain was perceived in the reduction of cost of services.

Uneven quality of service: The gains made in quality of service were limited due to several challenges e.g. limited training of staff, frequent system breakdown, non-implementation of queues/FIFO methods, limited process re-engineering.

One common theme across all these issues was the lack of stakeholder engagement in project design. The result was often an inconvenient location of service delivery point, increase in cost of service delivery and limited improvement in the quality of services rendered.

III. Citizen Engagement

3.1 What is Citizen Engagement

Engagement has been understood and explained in a variety of ways – Engagement as contributor or organisation builder or as an empowering process or as combination of all three. Politically, the meaning is inevitably linked to the relationship between the citizens and the state institutions.. Unfortunately, the citizens are often considered either as beneficiaries of government welfare programmes or in PPP terminology referred to as customers, neither of which truly reflects the government-citizen relationship. Active citizenship gives the right to hold others accountable, and accountability is the process of engaging in participation. Thus, the concept of citizenship encompasses social rights, social responsibilities and social accountability. Active engagement gives the right to hold others accountable, and accountability is the process of engaging in participation. It seeks greater accountability from the service providers through increased dialogue, consultation and by monitoring and assessing performance externally and mutually.

Citizen engagement goes beyond conventional public consultation by enabling citizens to do more than simply voice an opinion – it also allows them to participate in the deliberation process leading to decisions.

3.2 Need for Citizen Engagement

In India, while the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) provided enormous opportunity for people's participation in rural local governance institutions and processes, we have seen limited or zero people's participation in the design of e-Governance projects. As the government is incorporating ICTs into the delivery of G2C services, there are hardly any embedded mechanisms to facilitate the voice and space for citizen participation in e-governance. This is especially true for the weakest and the most marginalised sections of societies for whom the e-Governance projects are created to serve the most. There is now a greater consensus that citizen participation and civic engagement are the building blocks for democratic governance.

By participating in policy making, citizens help ensure that their needs and interests are taken into account in decision-making processes that affect their lives at both the national and local levels. Public participation also enhances citizens' recognition of their responsibility to take action to improve their lives and the provision of basic social services. Furthermore, public engagement improves the political position of marginalized or vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, and minorities that are often not taken into consideration.

Public engagement is also a process for educating decision makers (in parliament and government) about important social issues and citizens' pressing needs that parliaments and governments must address. Public participation also enhances citizen ownership of development processes, increases the sense of citizenship, and results in better implementation of development programs.

3.3 Levels of Engagement

Both public participation and citizen engagement are different from traditional forms of interaction between governments and citizens because they are based on a two way interaction, conversation or dialogue. Citizen engagement emphasizes the sharing of power, information, and a mutual respect between government and citizens.

<i>Level of Engagement</i>	<i>Flow of Information</i>
Public Communication	One Way – Service provider to public representative
Public Consultation	One way – Service Provider to sponsor
Public Engagement	Two way – between Service Provider and public representative

Ideally, citizen engagement requires governments to share in agenda-setting and to ensure that policy proposals generated jointly will be taken into account in reaching a final decision. Citizen engagement is appropriate at all stages of the policy development process and is best seen as an iterative process, serving to infuse citizens' values and priorities throughout the policy cycle. In processes of citizen engagement, citizens represent themselves as individuals rather than representing stakeholder groups.

3.4 Mechanism for Citizen Engagement

A variety of mechanism may be adopted to incorporate and promote citizen engagement in e-Governance Projects.

a) **Information sharing:** In order to generate awareness and to prepare the citizens, elected representatives and other stakeholders, wide range of information should disseminated. It includes display of citizen's Charter with Listing services and service levels, roles and responsibilities of officials and escalation mechanism, roles & responsibilities of citizens etc. In addition, regular meetings and interfaces may also used to share information. For many departments and services, mobile based voice or text services and web based presence also serves as an additional channel for information sharing.

b) **Consultation:** Consultative meetings with the stakeholders are to be undertaken at different stages of project cycle at regular intervals. Each intervention should be discussed with the citizens, elected representatives, local civil society groups and other stakeholders to get their perspectives included in the designing of the interventions, and thereby increasing the chances of ownership among various stakeholders.

c) **Joint assessment:** Participatory assessment and monitoring with the stakeholders, particularly the targeted citizens, are used as tools and approaches for enhancing civic engagement. These included use of a variety of tools like citizen monitoring and citizen assessment of urban services and interfaces with the elected representatives to discuss those monitoring results and findings.

d) **Shared decision-making and collaboration:** A range of participatory planning techniques include participatory urban planning at the ward level, comprehensive zonal planning as well sectoral plans like Solid Waste Management (SWM) at the city level. It involved engagement from various stakeholders at every stage of the planning process. The most often quoted example of this technique is from Porto Alegre, Brazil.

3.5 Challenges in Citizen Engagement

- a) **Apolitical societies:** Most members of society are reluctant to be political and acts of public engagement are often seen as political. Often, participation in general elections alone is perceived to be public engagement rather than participation in all aspects of policy-making processes with the goal of effecting change. Furthermore, it is often difficult to relate engagement to positive change in everyday life.
- b) **Lack of capacity to engage:** There is usually only limited knowledge within society of policy-making processes and limited knowledge and skills to communicate constructively with decision makers.
- c) **Limited Commitment:** The commitment and continuity to act to effect intended changes is usually limited, since creating an environment for meaningful participation can be a long struggle with few resources.
- d) **Low public trust:** Low public trust in government for not fully taking into consideration community ideas on priority areas for development; not fulfilling promises they have made in community meetings; the corruption of development budgets by state and local government bureaucracies; and bidding processes designed to maintain accountability resulting in government projects being contracted to the allies of those in government, etc. are reasons for low involvement of public in government projects. There is also scepticism towards participation as a means to deliver change. Citizen participation often means mobilizing attendance; community members or representatives of community groups are invited to

meetings only to fulfill the requirement of consultation with communities, but not really to obtain input to improve government priorities.

- e) Exclusion: Many consultative processes are seen to be ways of reinforcing the view of the dominant groups and exclusion of most marginalized and vulnerable groups, which are often left out of political processes.

DRAFT

IV. Existing Citizen Engagement Models & Mechanisms

4.1 India

- **National Capacity Building Framework**, Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR): MoPR has designed a National Capability Building Framework (NCBF), which outlines a comprehensive approach towards building the capabilities of Panchayats. NCBF was created inter alia for
 - (a) Improving the Gram/Ward Sabha functioning, particularly to provide opportunities to the poor, women and scheduled castes/scheduled tribes, to assert their demands through participative planning, monitor plan implementation and to hold their local governments to account through invoking Right to Information and social audit;
 - (b) Developing capacity of 'lynchpin capacity providers' and effective mechanisms to engage civil society and the private sector in the delivery of capacity development services; and
 - (c) Creating conducive socio-political environment through sensitising the media, political parties, representatives in the legislatures, civil society organisations and citizens to accepting and promoting local governments.

(Source: MoPR: http://www.pri-resources.in/OverView/NCBF_Report_02-01-10.pdf)

Citizen Report Card (CRC): Citizen Report Card is a simple yet powerful tool to provide systematic feedback to public agencies from users of public services. Some examples from India are given below.

- a) **Bangalore:** The Citizens' Report Card in Bangalore was a civil society initiative undertaken in 1993 to monitor government services in terms of efficiency and accountability. The exercise gathered citizen feedback on performance of public agencies and disseminated the findings to the citizenry, thus exerting public pressure on the agencies to initiate reforms. A seven-point rating scale facilitated quantification of citizen satisfaction levels with regard to service delivery, dimensions of corruption, staff behaviour, and so forth. The report card exercise was repeated in 1999 & 2003, to provide a comparative assessment of the progress since 1993.

(Source:

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEMPowerment/Resources/14832_Bangalore-web.pdf; and

<http://www.sasanet.org/documents/Case%20Studies/Bangalore%20Citizen%20report%20card.pdf>)

- b) Nagrik Sahyog Kendra or Citizen Cells, Gujarat: In the post earthquake scenario in 2006 in Gujarat, as part of the Reconstruction Programme in Bhachau, Kutch, an Owner Driven Housing Process was conceptualised. The Nagrik Sahyog Kendra were an integral part of the process and were entrusted with the responsibility for
- Educating citizens about all associated processes, guidelines and the progress through 'Nagarvani' and community meetings;
 - Holding Public consultations for selection of beneficiaries for each participating NGO;
 - Revising beneficiary list on the basis of on site physical verification by different NGOs and their feedback;
 - Facilitating periodic coordination meetings along with BhADA;
 - Appraising BhADA on operational issues;
 - Facilitating process of land regularisation for all the houses constructed/ retrofitted;
 - Preparing case files for land regularisation process;
 - Following up and ensuring provision of legal documents for land to each beneficiary

(Source: <http://www.unnati.org/pdfs/books/OwnerDrivenHousingProcess.pdf>)

- **Social Audit, Ministry of Rural Development, GoI:** Social audit is conducted *jointly* by the government and the people, especially by those people who are affected by, or are the intended beneficiaries of, the scheme being audited. Social Audit has been mandated under Section 17 of NREGA

(Source: http://nrega.nic.in/circular/DO_SRDS_Social%20Audit_23.8.2007.pdf)

4.2 Other Countries

Norway

An electronic public record database for the civil service (OEP) was launched in May 2010. This is the first of its kind in the world. Through this all citizens can get access to the documents of the central civil service. Until now, only journalists had the right to do so. On the OEP it is now possible to access the public records database and make searches in the public journals. All documents sent from ministries, directorates and state agencies are journaled in public files. If one finds something of interest, one may easily require the original document in question. The agency for Public Management and eGovernment (Difi)

carries the management responsibility for the service. The Ministry of Government Administration and Reform has been responsible for the development of the OEP.

(Source: <http://smart-grid.tmcnet.com/news/2010/05/18/4795395.htm>)

United Kingdom

The UK Government is releasing public data to help people understand how government works and how policies are made. www.data.gov.uk brings it together in one searchable website. Making this data easily available means it will be easier for people to make decisions and suggestions about government policies based on detailed information. The website classifies data based on domains e.g. health, local government etc., provides applications or Apps for mobile devices and provides datasets. It also provides platform for blogs, wiki, resources etc.

(Source: <http://data.gov.uk/>)

Philippines

The Filipino Report Card on Pro-Poor Services assesses the performance of selected government services based on client experience. These services are basic health, elementary education, housing, potable water, and food distribution. The Report Card results throw light on the constraints Filipinos face in accessing public services, their views about the quality and adequacy of services, and the responsiveness of government officials. They provide valuable insights on the priorities and problems faced by the clients and how the various services may be better tailored to the needs of Filipinos in general, and the poor in particular.

(Source: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPCENG/1143333-1116505690049/20509283/Filipino+Report+Card+on+Pro-chapter7-report-cards.pdf>)

Canada

To strengthen its citizen-centred approach to government, the Ontario province has begun to develop a strategy on citizen engagement. One component of this strategy is intended to expand the use of electronic channels, mainly the Internet, to help bring citizens closer to their government. The goal is to ensure citizens have access to a wide range of tools and information that will enable them to participate more fully in the democratic process. Electronic citizen engagement may take many forms. Some of the possibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Internet consultations on proposed law and/or policy
- “Town Hall” meetings via the Web
- open on-going dialogues on specific issues

- online remote voting for elected officials
- digital voting

Some e-tools for actively consulting with, and engaging, citizens already exist in Ontario. For example, all significant environmental policy and program changes are posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry, which is available through public libraries and on the Internet.

Source: http://www.mgs.gov.on.ca/en/IAAndIT/STEL02_046927.html

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) is considered the world's leading example of a national system of comprehensive, citizen-based progress and well-being measures. It began in 1999 with a national consultation of Canadian citizens to identify core national values and key aspects of well-being. The Index built a collaboration of representatives of community, universities, business and some government agencies, including the national statistics office of Canada. A framework of eight dimensions forms a framework for measuring the state of national engagement; community vitality, democratic engagement, education, environment, healthy population, leisure and culture, living standards and time use. The Index has begun to generate comprehensive reports on the state of democratic engagement in Canada and forms the basis for discussion of key aspects of citizen engagement and the models available for increasing these.

Brazil

The city government of Porto Alegre practices "participatory budgeting". This practice convenes neighbourhood, regional and city wide assemblies in which participants identify spending priorities with around 50,000 residents regularly participate. Since the practice was established a range of improvements in governance, well being and citizen engagements have been achieved, with an increase from 75 to 99% of homes having running water and the number of public schools almost tripling.

(Source: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEMPowerment/Resources/486312-1095970750368/529763-1095971096030/vergara.pdf>)

Australia

The Queensland Government has framed its 2020 vision for Queensland called Toward Q2 around five ambitions (Strong, Smart, Fair, Green and Healthy) that address current and future challenges. Toward Q2 will soon be supported by MyQ2. MyQ2 will use social media to build citizen engagement, which meets the needs of government. In addition to the traditional form of participation in policy development, the government has established a wide range of unique mechanisms and tools at the state and local levels, empowering

citizens and communities to be more directly involved in government policies and processes.

(Source: <http://www.towardq2.qld.gov.au/tomorrow/index.aspx>)

United States of America

On December 8, 2009, the White House issued an Open Government Directive requiring federal agencies to take immediate, specific steps to achieve key milestones in transparency, participation, and collaboration. In particular, agencies are expected to provide an Open Government Plan within 120 days “that will describe how [they] will improve transparency and integrate public participation and collaboration into [their] activities.” memorandum requires executive departments and agencies to take the following steps toward the goal of creating a more open government:

- Publish Government Information Online
- Improve the Quality of Government Information
- Create and Institutionalize a Culture of Open Government
- Create an Enabling Policy Framework for Open Government

(Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/documents/open-government-directive> and http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/memoranda_2010/m10-06.pdf)

V. Citizen Engagement in e-Governance Projects

In order to meaningfully engage with citizens, a detailed study of need, stakeholders and frequency must be undertaken. The engagement must be done in a planned manner with responsibility for the same assigned to a specific team.

5.1 Engagement Framework: Process of Citizen Engagement

In order to ensure a meaningful engagement with citizens, a well thought out process must be implemented. Some of the key steps in that process are:

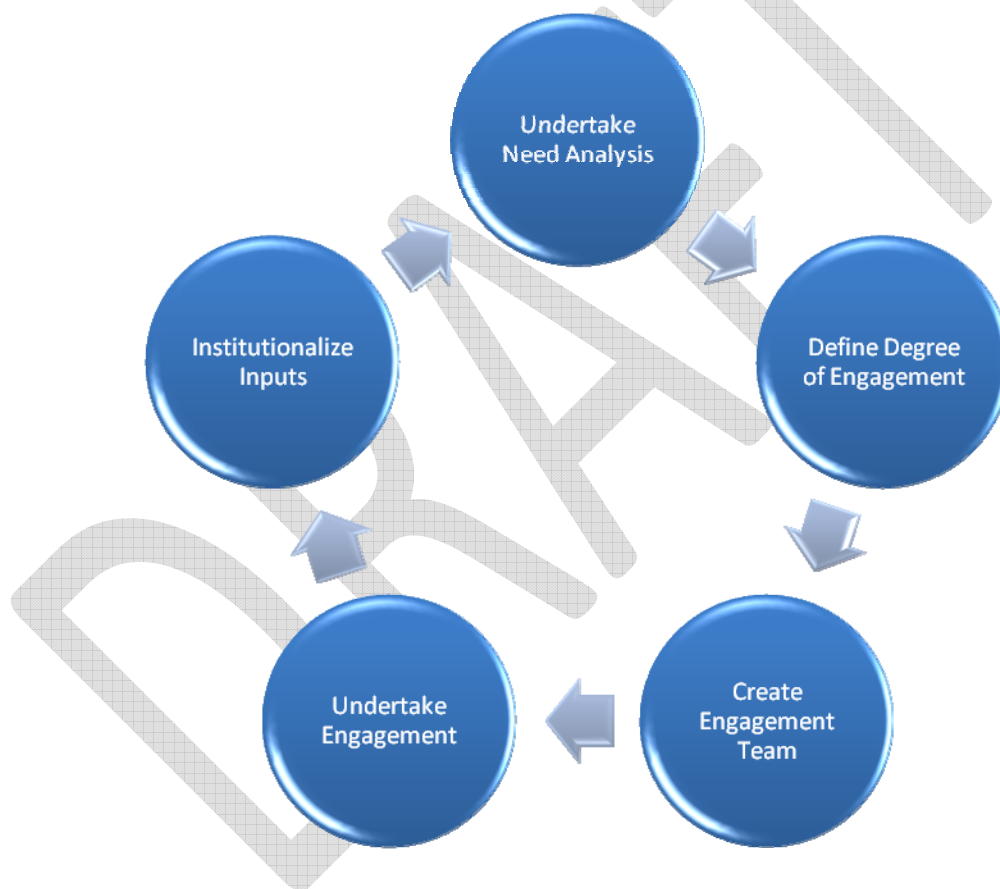


Diagram 1: Process of Citizen Engagement

5.1.1 Undertaking Need Analysis

The first step in citizen engagement process is the identification of need or objective for which such an engagement is being proposed. Towards this end, in addition to the services and processes for which citizen engagement is to be undertaken be clearly identified, the vision and objectives should be stated in such terms so that, as far as possible the outcome

can be quantified and measured. For example, objective of an engagement can be either to undertake the existing on-ground realities e.g. time taken to deliver a particular service or perception of/inputs on quality of service delivered. Therefore at each stage of project, the objective of undertaking engagement must be defined. This requires planning of objectives, clear and verifiable indicators and accessible means of verification. Some of the objectives, based on project stage may be as under:

- **Conceptualisation & DPR Preparation:** to ensure that the scheme is need-based and drawn up in consultation with community, serving especially the poor and the disadvantaged
- **Implementation - Pilot & Roll Out:** to ensure that envisaged services are being delivered, properly and to right people
- **Post Implementation stage:** to ensure that type & quality of work is in tune with initial identified requirement.
- **Project Enhancement - After the completion of work:** to ensure continuous improvement in the project deliverables

5.1.2 Defining Degree of Engagement

In an ideal scenario, the citizens may collaborate from conceptualisation to implementation of the project and may even be empowered to reject or alter the project design at a later stage of the project. However, in real life, project managers must define the intervention points and degree of engagement. The engagement must be part of the primary plan of the project implementation cycle and it is also necessary to define the frequency and stage of the engagement at the project planning stage. Some of the key questions that may inform such an engagement framework include:

- Goals & Objectives (long term engagement, establishing baseline, feedback on service etc.)
- Project stage (Conceptualisation, Implementation etc.)
- Stakeholders involved (individuals, citizen groups, elected representatives etc.); and
- Legal and administrative imperatives (compulsory social audits/public hearings etc.)

For e-Governance projects, the first three stages of engagement spectrum given below may be relevant:

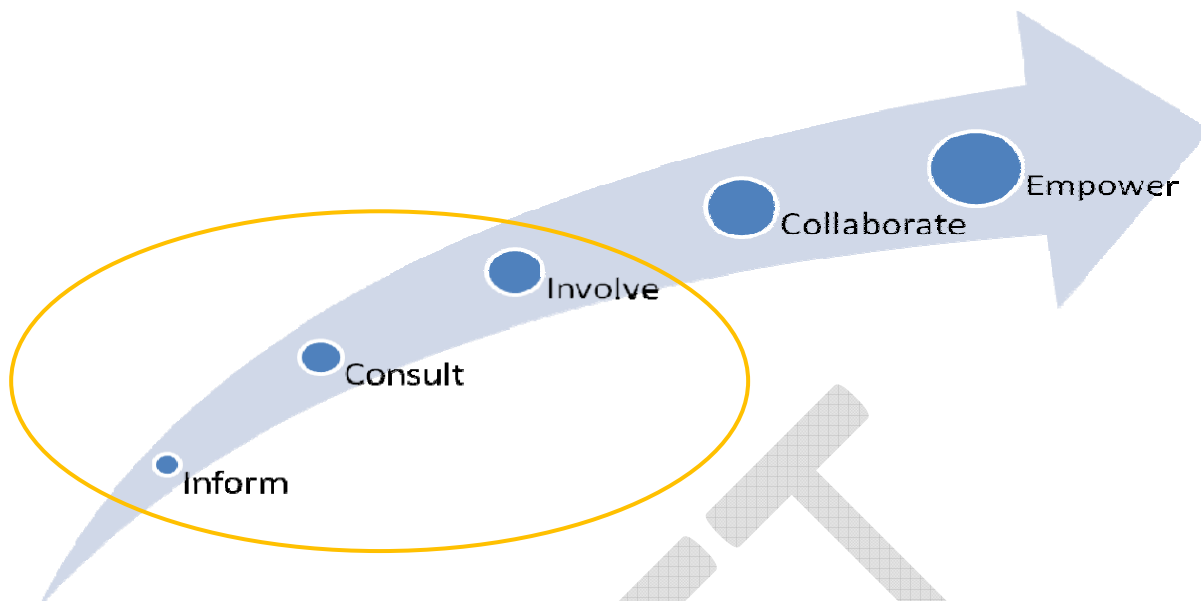


Diagram 2: Public Participation Spectrum (Source: IAP2 IAP2. (c) 2007 International Association for Public Participation)

Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation

- Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

(Source: <http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/CoreValues.pdf> IAP2. (c) 2007 International Association for Public Participation)

It is important to note that if care is not taken while identifying the groups and mechanisms for interaction, citizen involvement can lead to a sense of disempowerment and a reduced

sense of agency, and participation can be perceived as meaningless, tokenistic or manipulated.

5.1.3 Creating Citizen Engagement team

Since the process of citizen engagement is ongoing, it is recommended a citizen engagement team may be created for the project. This team ideally should consist of internal stakeholders - decision makers, service providers, service/process influencers as well as external stakeholder – beneficiaries, civil society organisations, elected representatives. The diversity of team would depend upon the breadth of the project. For example, if the project is on Panchayats or Municipalities, then members of Gram Panchayats or Municipal Corporation may be included in the team, while for projects related to business services may includes members of business associations. The team would be entrusted with the following responsibilities:

- Developing background information
- Publicizing the effort
- Designing benchmarks and criteria for evaluation
- Identifying and recruiting participants
- Selecting tools for citizen participation
- Reporting the outcomes of the process
- Making recommendations based on the outcomes

5.1.4 Undertaking Engagement

The process of citizen engagement is cyclical and can broadly be divided based on the stage of project development. A pictorial depiction of citizen engagement based on project life cycle and possible tools and techniques that may be used in each stage is given below:

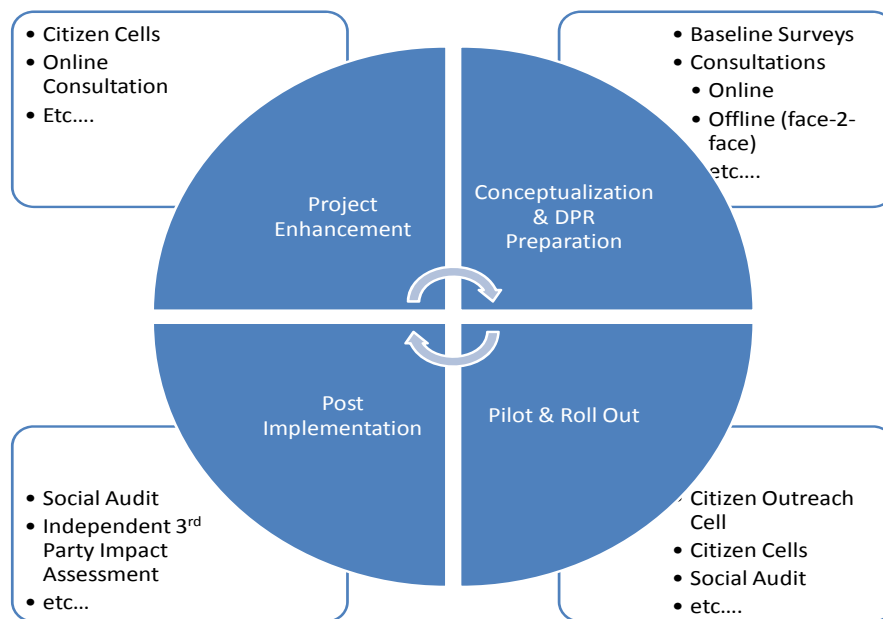


Diagram 3: e-Governance Citizen Engagement Framework

5.1.5 Techniques of Engagement

Surveys: The purpose of surveys is to systematically collect data through a carefully designed questionnaire from a set of identified community, generally on a one-to-one basis either in person, telephonically, or by mail. When done offline, these are often conducted either at the on service delivery location or at responder's residence/office. They can be conducted at different stages of project lifecycle and can used for creating a baseline (pre-project surveys) or assessing impact (post project surveys). When undertaken with representative sampling and provide specific information for statistical validation. Random sampling is used to get a more generalised feedback. Surveys provide input from cross-section of public without requiring people to come to meetings and provide statistically valid results. They are however, Time consuming (average time taken - 6-12 weeks), expensive, provide limited level of detail as it is often difficult to merge quantitative and qualitative in one survey or cover a vast range of topics in a single survey. Surveys can also be undertaken online. However, the response from such surveys is generally not statistically valid.

Consultations: Consultation with citizens can take many forms and like surveys may be conducted in an online or offline mode and are generally moderated. Consultations may be undertaken in various manners, some of which are given below:

- **Focus groups:** These often used to obtain inputs into planning decision and the group consists of diverse groups of stakeholders that may be directly impacted by the project. The focus group method is a depth technique, which seeks to elicit rich qualitative data about a participant's experience with a product, service or concept. Generally focus groups consist of 6 to 8 participants and a moderator who ensures the correct questions are asked and facilitates the discussion process. Given the small number of participants, data from focus groups cannot be generalised to large populations as structured surveys using objective sampling techniques can. However, running 2 or 3 focus groups with varied participants from the same target groups can provide an indication of the reliability of the results. Focus Groups are expensive and substantial investments in terms of time and resources need to be made in analysis of inputs, participants may need to be paid incentives to attend, recording and other facilities are required, and moderation is a highly professional job.
- **Expert Panel:** A specialised focus group may also be formed as an Expert Panel. Such consultation presents opportunity for balanced and objective discussion on key issues and very useful in scientific or technical subjects. Expert panels are usually made up of independent specialists recognised in the domain of the evaluated programme. Expert panels are a means of arriving at a value judgement on the programme and its effects. It requires high degree of involvement and preparation. In case of constituting the expert panel, due care needs to be taken to ensure that the discussion and views are balanced or at least opposing sides get equal opportunity to present their case. Expert panels are used to reach consensus on complex programmes or to draw conclusions on the impacts of programmes which are not directly comparable and are sometimes used in the selection of projects for funding. The expert panel can be used to produce judgement based on qualitative and quantitative data, even if these are incomplete. Its conclusions enjoy a high degree of credibility when recognised experts are used. However, there are potential weaknesses. Since experts must have extensive experience in the field, and therefore are at risk of bias. Moreover, the comparison of opinions may lead to the under-evaluation of minority points of view.
- **Delphi Process:** This is a structured process of getting inputs, and involves several rounds of iterations in which matters are discussed, and responses and conclusions shared to reach a stage where no more significant changes or differences occur. This is done through a series of questionnaires and controlled feedback mechanism. It is usually undertaken without the participants needing to meet face-to-face and is very

useful in case where participants are in different geographical locations. It also be conducted anonymously so that respondents feel comfortable expressing deeply divergent views. This method is useful to explore specific, one-dimensional issues but seem to have limited utility for complex, multi-dimensional modelling.

Open Meetings: Such consultations are typically open ended consultations where some initial agenda is identified and feedback is taken from all stakeholders who choose to be present at such meetings. This is often used to elicit feedback from service seekers and has been used extensively in the form of social audit or citizen juries. Unless conducted with specific agenda and moderated expertly, they can often degenerate into laissez faire discussion mode. Used constructively, they can result in greater transparency and accountability especially in government processes.

- **Social Audit**, by definition, is carried out by the community of stakeholders and includes beneficiaries / participants, implementing agency, Gram Panchayat representatives etc. Schemes like MGNREGS have used models of social audit arrangement like Village Social Auditors (VSA) and Vigilance and Monitoring Committee (VMC) as Citizen Engagement team to carry out social audit. Social Audit should comprise of a range of stakeholders which safeguard the integrity of the audit. In addition, the audit should necessarily be overseen by an external third party agency that is competent in undertaking / facilitating the audit process. It is also desirable to have a citizen social audit champion within the project to ensure focus and continuity in the process.

VI. Way Forward

Although the concept of citizen engagement or public participation is not new and has been implemented in varied degrees in different projects across the country, but sustained efforts are required to ensure institutionalisation of the philosophy of citizen engagement for all projects and in all stages of project implementation. It is equally important to ensure that such an engagement is constructive by design and leads to value add in the project. Since NeGP aims at changing fundamentally the way public services are delivered with citizen centricity as its cornerstone, it is but natural that continuous citizen engagement should be first be implemented in NeGP projects. The following is proposed as way forward to achieve institutionalisation of citizen engagement in e-Governance projects in India:

Stakeholder Consultation: Although some internal stakeholder consultations have been undertaken by DIT, it is proposed that wider and broad based consultation be undertaken to refine the proposed framework and ensure its acceptability and implementation. To enable such consultations it is proposed that the proposed framework be discussed in the meetings of Council of Mission Leaders, State and regional consultation workshops as well as policy consultation meetings with various departments, ministries, industry and civil society representatives and interested citizens. The draft consultation document would also be published in DIT, NeGP and all other relevant websites and publicised in social media as well. It is proposed that the consultation process be completed by June 2011 and the framework be adopted and notified by August 2011.

Creating Citizen Engagement Fund: Creation of Citizen Engagement fund is important not only for developing methodologies for citizen engagement but also for funding the actual citizen engagement pilots which will demonstrate the utility of the concept. It is proposed that DIT shall take the initiative in creating the fund by Sep 2011.

Preparation of Engagement Toolkit: To implement the framework, it is proposed that a comprehensive toolkit be prepared that can act a guide for undertaking the engagement. The proposed toolkit would enable the implementers to identify the potential methodologies and mechanisms for undertaking at different stages of the project.

Pilot Citizen Engagement Framework in NeGP MMPs: In order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the framework, it is proposed that the framework be piloted for select NeGP MMPs at different stages of implementation. This would ensure testing of the framework as well as designing of appropriate methodologies for citizen engagement.