



eParticipation Guidelines for United Arab Emirates Government Entities

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This document was developed as part of the Web Technical Guidelines Document for UAE Government Entities

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1. PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to give guidelines to the government entities in the United Arab Emirates on how to enhance interaction between them and their customers using various tools, especially Web 2.0 applications. EMIRATES EGOVERNMENT has created this document for the purpose of improving people's participation in government policies and decision making. This is a crucial factor in fostering trust between the government and the public.

2. INTRODUCTION

In the age of eGovernment, there is a greater demand for public services and information to be customized to people's needs and to be available at the touch of a button, or click of a mouse. Achieving this would require the participation of ordinary users in the process of public service improvement and development.

eParticipation is all about this, and about making the decision-making processes easier by connecting people with the government and enabling them to submit their views, comments, complaints and advice to the government through the use of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

3. EPARTICIPATION TOOLS

The most popular eParticipation tools include:

- **Discussion Forums:** Government Entities can use discussion forums to raise certain issues and seek responses from the public. Users can also raise their own issues and questions and ask responses from the government entity as well as from other users.
- **Web Logs (Blogs):** The government entity may create one or more blogs and use them as a platform to convey its mission, news and updates. Users' comments are published after a reasonable degree of censorship.
- **Live Chat:** Government entities should give the user the option to chat live with one of its staff to answer their queries regarding its services during office hours.
- **Customers Satisfaction Surveys:** These surveys are posted periodically on the government entity's website. They help gauge users' satisfaction in a precise manner.
- **Opinion Polls:** Opinion polls on the government entity's website explore users' opinions on certain issues in order to help decision makers.
- **Feedback Forms:** these forms allow users to voice their opinions on different issues ranging from the entity's services to the content of the website.
- **Social Networking Sites:** such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn etc...

4. EPARTICIPATION IN UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Government entities in the UAE need to work with citizens and businesses to identify and test ways of giving them more of a stake in the policy-shaping process, as well as getting their best possible satisfaction regarding public services and how they are introduced through developed channels such as the Internet, mobile phones, etc.

It is required that each government entity in the UAE apply the electronic sharing information and communication technologies available and enable its customers to connect with it and with one another through its portal. This will broaden and deepen community participation.

While adopting the eParticipation approach, the following points need to be considered by UAE government entities:

1. A link to “My Gov.” portal needs to be published on the website of the ministry
2. Electronic forums to be established with the entity be able to raise topics of discussion and people enter theirs as well
3. A government entity should have its own blog in which its CIO responds to people’s questions, comments and complaints and asks them for suggestions and views.
4. A chatting utility needs to be one of the channels used for communication between government and its customers. Chat can be available during working hours at the minimum.

5. One of the best practices in terms of chat is to avail it on the service level. A link to be available for the service user to communicate with the government organization and enquire about certain details related to the service.
6. Government entities must conduct customer satisfaction surveys. The results of these surveys need to be reported and published on the corporate website of the government entity
7. Polling is a good way to sense people's views and reactions on certain policies and measures. It is recommended that each government website has its own poll service with past results being archived and accessible for the public.
8. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter are all recommended tools for government entities.
9. It is good practice to have the talkback (comment) service under each news story published on the government website (this should be moderated)
10. Feedback should be encouraged so that people give their evaluation of the portal, content, services etc. One good practice in that regard is "Did you find this content/service useful?"
11. Government entities need to moderate their blogs and discussion forums in order to prevent profanity and offence. However, these entities should allow certain level of criticism regarding their policies and services.
12. A clear Comment Policy needs to be published where applicable on the eParticipation page
13. Moderation policy should be clarified to users.



14. Government accounts on social networking websites must not be stagnant. Points of discussion need to be raised on a regular basis.
15. It is recommended that government websites have links to prime minister's website, blog (if and when available) and pages on Facebook and twitter.