

iDEAS FOR GOVERNANCE

IDEAS FOR GOVERNANCE TRUST BELIEF

- Administrators and Practitioners in government bodies would welcome ideas that improve the quality of life for all citizens
- It is possible to empower government bodies by making freely available ideas that could work in their local environment
- If appropriate ideas are generically available, local government body CEOs and their team would adapt them suitably and take it forward under their leadership
- Ideas which take shape through this process in local bodies have a greater chance of success over those 'pushed' by external bodies
- The trust does not expect any acknowledgement for use of any of the ideas set out in its forum. It hopes that some of its ideas find form across government bodies.

IDEAS FOR GOVERNANCE TRUST OBJECTIVES

- To compile ideas for use by government bodies for improving quality of life for all citizens
- To make available these ideas as 'freeware' for use by anyone
- To disseminate these ideas by using suitable channels of communication
- To encourage others to contribute ideas for use as 'freeware'

ABOUT IDEAS FOR GOVERNANCE TRUST

Ideas for Governance Trust is a not for profit trust set up to assist government bodies in improving the quality of life for its citizens. This has been set up by V. Ravichandar, Chairman & CEO, [Feedback Business Consulting Services Pvt. Limited](#), India as part of the Corporate Social Responsibility of the firm.

Since 2000, Ravichandar has been serving as a Member of the Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) working with civic agencies in Bangalore on a pro bono basis. The idea of a Ideas for Governance Trust is based on the experience of working with urban local bodies in Bangalore, being part of Janaagraha, a citizen movement for participatory democracy, and carrying the message of public governance to many cities across India.

Contact details

V. Ravichandar,
Trustee,
Ideas for Governance Trust,
c/o Feedback Business Consulting Services Pvt. Ltd,
5th Floor, Oxford Towers,
139, Airport Road,
Bangalore 560 008.

Ph : 91-80-2520 2902
Mob: 91-98450 24823
Fax : 91-80-2520 1402
<http://www.ideasforgov.org/>

Citizen interface

Citizen participation , April 1, 2004

The Idea

Participatory democracy. Building a platform for citizens / resident associations to constructively engage with civic bodies. Patronage to give way to negotiated agreements. Importance of data for decision making.

The Rationale

Supply side reforms in government bodies welcome. However for effective changes in the quality of life ordinary citizens have to engage with the system - call it the demand side pressure on the system.

An Approach

- Needs an independent body (NGO) which is focused on providing a platform for citizens to engage with the government organizations
- The role of the independent body would be to facilitate the engagement with the government bodies - the specific efforts would have to be made by the citizens / resident groups
- The independent body could set out a road map for engagement for citizens to adopt. Some examples - ward works planning with locally elected representatives, developing a ward vision for say the next 3-5 years with costing details and funding possibilities in partnership with government, etc. The choices are left to citizens / resident groups who subscribe to the idea.
- The independent body would invest in providing the skill sets and data templates for use by citizens. For instance this could be in the form of effort and cost estimates for various civic activities (eg. pothole filling, waste processing, pavements, street lights, etc.)
- Citizens / resident groups draw on the know how pool centrally developed, develop their own databases and engage with the system

Potential Partnership

An acceptance by the government bodies that they are willing to partner with citizens in addressing their concerns and meeting their aspirations

The Benefits

- Extends the idea of democracy by allowing citizens a voice in the day to day functioning of government which impacts their quality of life
- Citizens go beyond electing their reps. They are encouraged to engage with the system in a participatory manner
- Allows citizens a 'tool kit' and a mechanism to engage with the government bodies

Interactions , April 5, 2004

The Idea

Reduce need for citizens to approach civic agencies

The Rationale

The premise that operates in government-citizen interaction - the more often the citizen has to visit / interact with the government body, the more 'favourable' it is for government officials! And needless to add, lesser need to interact is in favour of citizens.

An Approach

- Review the process in civic bodies with respect to requirements in respect of citizen interaction with the body - forms, number of applications, details asked for, number of visits required. A critical look at what is required and what is not
- An example with respect to site allotments. After allotment a successful applicant has to apply for follow up documents to enable them to get a loan. Alternately these and other similar documents can be part of the kit given to the successful applicants so that there is no need to approach the government body for these again
- Another example - citizens often run from pillar to post because they do not know what are the steps to be followed to get a thing done (for eg. apply for a change of owners name in property records). Can there be full and clear disclosure on the steps to be followed for common activities for which a citizen needs to approach a government body. And the associated lead time in which they can expect action
- Can there be an escalation mechanism to senior level officers set in place. This should be indicated to citizens so that they have known means of grievance redressal

Potential Partnership

--

The Benefits

- Citizen friendly administration
- Less scope for 'speed' money

Public Record of Operations and Finance (PROOF) , April 5, 2004

The Idea

City bodies should report and discuss their quarterly performance with the citizens - akin to the private sector. This can be done if the back end accounting systems (like a fund based accounting system) are in place

The Rationale

Citizens are the 'shareholders' in the civic system. They have a right to information from the civic bodies. An institutional mechanism to generate the required information and a willingness to share it with citizens on a periodic basis can build confidence with government functioning on the ground

An Approach

- The civic body will need a robust accounting system akin to a fund based accounting system
- Since such systems are built from the lowest unit of measure, compilations can be done as required - for instance it could be city wide or done at just a ward level or restricted to say the education module
- At the end of each quarter, the financial outputs could be made available to citizens for study. They need to be trained to analyse the numbers
- This could be followed by a public meeting between the government body CEO, the elected reps and the interested citizens.
- Over time, the quality of public debate based on data driven analysis will improve

Potential Partnership

Government and citizens. An acceptance by government that the best way forward for greater accountability is transparency in information sharing with its citizen constituency.

The Benefits

- Availability of financial information
- Forum for raising data driven queries on the financial statements
- Builds confidence on government spending - will create a climate for citizens to truthfully report and pay taxes

The Idea

Using technology aids to provide information / civic services to citizens.

The Rationale

Computerisation and the internet have enabled newer delivery models. Building back end systems and using a mix of citizen convenience centres / kiosks / internet enabled information can help disseminate relevant information to citizens

An Approach

- Any e-governance initiative has to initially focus on the back end processes, work flow and information database
- Building an attractive front end interface is easy but of limited utility if it is not powered with relevant information from the back office
- The solution needs to be modular, robust and scalable as the needs increase
- Civic agencies should consider going beyond 'right to information' enabled provisions in the act. They should ask themselves "Why should I not put this information out in the public space" rather than "Why should I". The greater the transparency, the higher the credibility of the organization
- Putting out data on work tenders, work in progress, expected completion dates, grievances, online payments, access to public documents, status updates, etc. necessary
- A pure play internet solution is not feasible nor desirable. There is a need for citizen convenience centres / kiosks where citizens can get their interface issues with the civic agencies addressed with assistance from local officials at the centre
- Citizens can be charged for information sought from the database
- Private agencies could be used for running the citizen convenience centres

Potential Partnership

Private e-firms, Entrepreneurs and civic agencies

The Benefits

- Towards a transparent, informative civic space replacing traditionally opaque government agencies
- Real time updation of data leading to up to date status
- Citizen friendly administration
- Efficiency in urban local bodies