

Bringing Innovation to e-Governance

Assam

The Government of Assam recently initiated a project named 'ePrastuti' for standardisation of all Government websites. The project recognises that design of these websites impacts the overall image of the government; hence it aims to combat the issues within the aspects of their design and development.

The vision of this project was to keep citizen needs at the core and provide an integrated web experience for the citizens across all government websites. A significant feature of the project is that the entire ownership of the website and of its contents lies with the department.

An institutional mechanism was established with the Chief Secretary as the Chief Responsible Officer of the project. Each department and its subordinate organizations designated their respective Responsible Officers, Master Trainers

CHALLENGES FACED

- To address information needs of all the potential users
- Low user experience of the websites
- Department websites existed as silos with no cross sharing of information
- Websites were hosted in non-standard domains and technology environments
- Reluctance of department users to take the ownership
- The implementation of ePrastuti, has brought about a transformative shift in the way the websites are designed, developed and implemented; from the existing 29 websites to the 212 connected websites, the project is now being extended to districts and subdivision levels
- With the completion of the first phase of information aggregation through the websites, steps are now underway to move to the next level by bringing services together under this platform



FINAL OUTCOMES

- Involvement and acceptance of all the stakeholders
- Branding of all the websites under a unique visual identifier helped the users to identify with the Government of Assam websites
- A single website that earlier took six to twelve months to development, can now be developed in less than 30 days
- Better content creation that drives informative websites attuned to user needs
- Lesser dependency on vendors for management of websites
- Significant cost savings

and evolved the Governance Structure for steering the project. An inclusive approach involving all the stakeholders was adopted for the development of the websites.

A 'Standardized Website Framework (SWF)' was developed first and all government websites were developed adhering to the principles and standards laid down by the SWF. The new websites will make it simpler and easier for citizens to use with intuitive interface, ensure content authenticity and accuracy, find information which will also be time-saving and also cater to people of all age groups, irrespective of the cognitive ability and background.

For the technology design, development and implementation, a Website Development Cell was formed under the overall coordination of National Informatics Centre(NIC) by the IT department, Government of Assam.

For the long-term sustainability of website and its content are critical and for this the department was educated through Orientation and Content Managers workshops, Training and Certification Programmes for the Master Trainers, Certification of Master Trainers through evaluation and Advanced Training programme for Certified Master Trainers at IIT Guwahati.

To make the process effective, an expert committee from IIT Guwahati was constituted to advise on usability, user experience and aspects of human interaction.



INNOVATIVE APPROACH TAKEN

1. Content preparation methodology adopted for creating the website content: The Content Managers of every department were taken through activity-based exercises. The content managers had to identify the target user groups of their websites. The content was then grouped to meet the specific target user groups of the websites.
2. Developing Master Trainers: Capability building was important for sustaining the website management. The approach was to build a core workbench within the department through a team of 'Master Trainers'. Evaluation for Certification as 'ePrastuti Certified Master Trainers' was carried out to ensure the quality of 'Master Trainers', which required the successful qualifying of written and online exams. The certified Master Trainers were further trained at IIT Guwahati.
3. Website language: The content was made very intuitive - predicting the mind of the user, what queries the user come to the website for, what actions will be performed by the user.
4. Focus on user experience and interaction.
5. Usability testing practices were adopted for improving the user experience of the websites.