

Developing citizen-centric mobile apps

The department of electronics and information technology's Mobile Seva initiative provides citizens information on various services



Since its launch in July 2011, the central ministry of agriculture alone has sent 339.4 million text messages with information regarding government schemes and issues related to agriculture. Photo: Ramesh Pathania/Mint

The government is warming up to using mobile phones and tablets to deliver information and services to citizens.

The department of electronics and information technology's Mobile Seva (mgov.gov.in) initiative provides citizens information on services such as passport applications and Right to Information (RTI), through mobile phone apps, text messages and an interactive voice response menu. Apps available on the Mobile Seva website also provide information on services including locating medical facilities and police stations.

The website, which recently won the UN Public Service Award 2014 under the category of "promoting whole of government approaches in the information age", also provides push text messaging services, enabling government departments to send bulk SMSes, and pull SMS services, through which citizens can request information from government departments using specific codes.

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The mobile app store (apps.mgov.gov.in) was launched in January 2012 and hosts more than 300 live and 62 demo apps. Mint has compiled a list of apps from among these that provide citizen-centric services.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION DIRECTORY

The app provides information about public information officers, officials who are in charge of receiving and responding to RTI applications across government departments. The information is updated dynamically with details of new public information officers.

Downloads: 6,776

VOTER INFORMATION SEARCH USING SMS AND INTERNET

The app lets a voter check whether his or her name has been included in the electoral roll of a constituency. The user can also find out the polling station using this application. There are two versions of the app; one uses mobile Internet and the other SMS service to fetch the information.

Downloads: 6,910

RAKSHAK

An emergency response app specifically designed for women and senior citizens, it can send a text with the current location of the person to four different numbers at the click of a button. These numbers can be specified by the user at the time of installation. It also initiates a voice call to an emergency number.

Downloads: 2,165

HOSPITAL TRACKER

The app, aimed at travellers, provides assistance during medical emergencies. People who are not aware of the neighbourhood or a town can use it to locate hospitals and clinics in the vicinity. It fetches contact details of the hospitals, the distance from the current location as well as user ratings. It also has an in-app calling facility, so you can select the number shown in the app to make a call as well as navigation to the selected facility.

Downloads: 1,195

IN MY VICINITY

Similar to the Hospital tracker, this app can locate nearby police stations, ATMs, post offices, railway stations, bus depots and fire stations. It displays contact details of the facilities and the distance from the current location. This app also has an in-app calling facility and navigation to the selected places.

Downloads: 948

SHELTOR

Aimed at students belonging to socially- and educationally-backward classes, primarily from rural areas, it helps users find government-run welfare hostels for girls and boys. It aims to enable students to pursue secondary and higher education. Initially, it was piloted for Andhra Pradesh, but was extended to other states. The user can access hostel information based on the state, district and division in offline mode.

Downloads: 193

mPASSPORT SEVA

The app aims at providing all passport-related services to Indian citizens in a speedy, convenient and transparent manner. Smartphone users can track the status of their passport application, locate the passport seva kendra (PSK) and get general information on various steps involved in obtaining a passport through the app.

The project, which was executed by the consular, passport and visa division of the ministry of external affairs, in a public-private-partnership mode with Tata Consultancy Services Ltd as the private partner, is one of the largest ventures of the government of India under the national e-governance plan. The services are being provided to the citizens through 77 PSKs across India.

Downloads: 69

mSWASTHYA

This is an initiative to connect patients with doctors. This app has a separate interface for doctors and patients, depending on their login credentials. The patients who have been added by the doctor can seek real-time consultation.

The app also provides for remote monitoring of patients by capturing vital parameters such as ECG (electrocardiogram), blood pressure, pulse rate and body temperature through integration with the body sensors (there are different apps to measure these parameters). It then sends the information directly to the doctor. For any abnormality recorded beyond a threshold value, alerts are sent immediately to the doctor. In addition, mSwasthya provides location-based services to help locate and identify the nearby hospitals and clinics.

Downloads: 717

PERSONAL TREATMENTS

This app lets users save their medical records in the format provided, which can be edited and sorted out by date.

Downloads: 2,571

DUPLICATE BIRTH CERTIFICATE

This app can be used to apply for duplicate birth certificate in case the original certificate is lost or misplaced. The users can also apply in Hindi by downloading the appropriate driver from the Mobile Seva app store.

There is a similar government app for applying for duplicate residence certificates.

Downloads: 1,674

These five apps are being tested out and clubbed as demo apps by the government:

RTI

The app lets users make an RTI application directly to various government departments.

Downloads: 242

PENSION FORM FOR DISABLED

The app caters to disabled citizens by providing them with a platform to register for pension.

Downloads: 183

DEATH CERTIFICATE

This app can be used to apply for death certificates. The app store has a similar demo app to apply for birth certificates.

Downloads: 193

LOUDSPEAKER APPROVAL

Did you know that you needed permission to use a loudspeaker during events? This app can be used to get permission from local government authorities.

Downloads: 216

LOCATION-BASED SERVICES

This app allows users to see their current location as well as track the location of friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

Downloads: 258