

**Position Paper:
Developing a Business Model for the MGD eCenter**

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It is well recognized that the Large Scale Development Programs¹ globally, have to harness the capabilities of various stakeholders, agencies and institutional mechanisms to achieve the desired level of outcomes. Notably a typical Ecosystem of any Large Scale Development Program may consist of several stakeholders such as:

1. Lead agency / a government department
2. Consulting agency
3. Implementation agency
4. Technology Providers
5. Funding Agencies
6. Service Providers / Business Partners
7. Non-Governmental Organizations
8. Research agencies
9. Actual Beneficiaries
10. Practitioners etc.

Each one of these stakeholders brings in different types of capabilities, skills and have different roles to play the entire ecosystem of the development program. Various components of the MDG eCenter can be classified into core and support components as they would potentially have a core and support impact respectively on the ICTD programs; and each of these components will have a certain dependency on the above stated stakeholders.

The ICTD programs/projects are generally initiated by a complex process of strategic planning as has already been recognized through the MDG eCenter components. Even at the policy level, the strategic planning process that is desired to be achieved through the 'Strategic Planner' on the MDG eCenter will require harnessing all/many these capabilities.

It is evident that in case of MDG eCenter, we are trying to do this with the help of several mechanisms including 'intelligent systems'. However, because of the very nature of the developmental programs there is an extent to which the strategic planning process can be

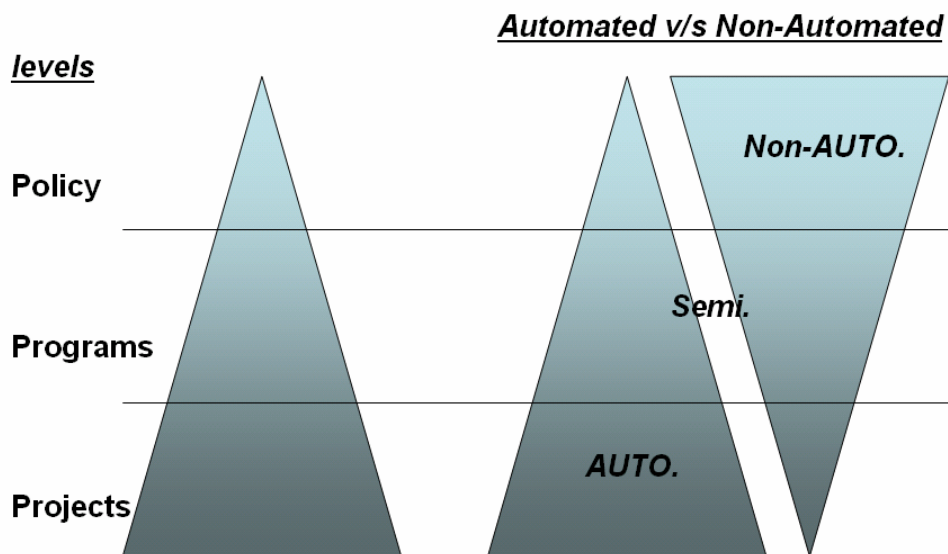
¹ Large Scale Development Programs (LSDP) can be defined as a cluster of related projects (ICTD) originating for a certain policy mandate, impacting certain geography with a certain set of stakeholders, towards certain development goals.

(or should be) automated and it would be intricate to replace the human intervention angle to a large extent to begin with. The ICTD project decision making process has functions that may potentially be identified as:

1. Automated functions
2. Semi-Automated functions
3. Non-Automated functions

The biggest challenge would be to address the Semi-Automated functions and Non-Automated functions through the MDG eCenter. The following exhibit explains the empirical nature:

Empirical Characteristics of Decision Process Clusters across various levels in Development Programs



Probably the intended automation may impact the skew of the above pyramids and convert a few more process clusters from non-auto to the automated ones. Assuming that we are trying to develop an “Intelligent-Engine” that will drive the core components and related processes of eMGDs portal, it is important that we understand how the capabilities of various stakeholders will be brought together to achieve this.

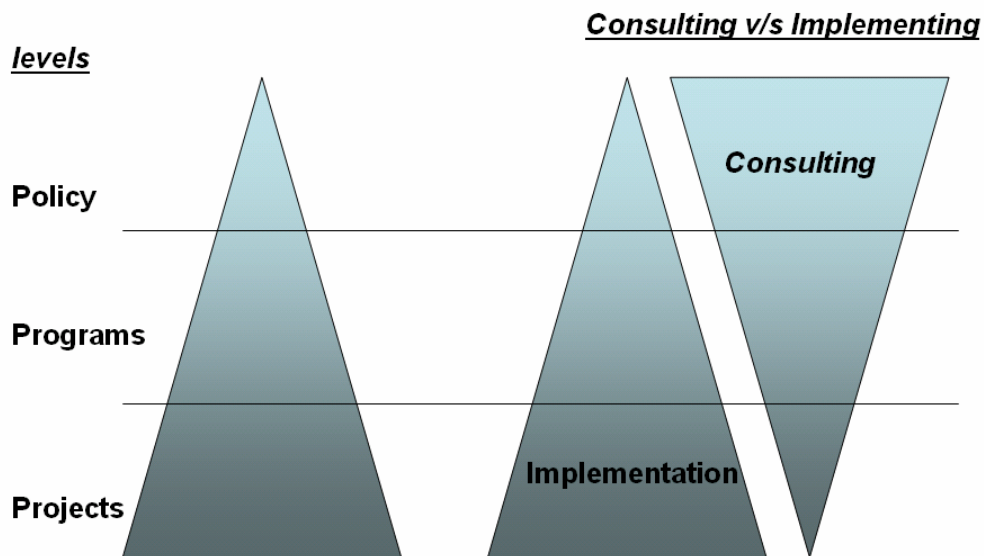
The greatest problem of the developmental programs/projects is that it is this unstructured decision making which poses the most serious challenge. However, imposing external-structured approaches to this ambiguous process may not be an optimal solution in all the cases.

Experience shows that even with live consultancy support (in-house or outsourced) one takes several weeks or even months to develop a certain level of comfort and even

consulting organizations take enough time in understanding the context; all of which is very vital to the strategic planning process of any ICTD project. The developing country experiences also show that there are enough evidences from the consulting world, of occasions when the entire report or outcome of a project development process goes out of context. It would be interesting to see how this would be replicated in the online ‘do-it-yourself’ paradigm.

In all such engagements, human intervention and continuous calibration is required on an ongoing basis. This means that we will have to somehow replicate these characteristics on the portal as well or else probably find suitable algorithms, mechanisms and their combinations that can do it for us. Further it is recognized that different types of competencies are required to support decision process at various levels as the exhibit below explains:

Competencies Required to support Decision Process Clusters across various levels in Development Programs



Since UN-GAID is prime the facilitator of the e-MGD portal and is neither a consulting organization nor an implementation agency these competencies will have to be suitably sourced from outside. Hence the institutional mechanism (or Governance structure) will have to ensure that the respective stakeholders come on board and participate actively.

The purpose of the e-MGD portal as we see is to serve as a ‘contextual bridge’ between the desired capabilities for ICTD project and the available capabilities. The kind of skills and competencies required as refereed in the above exhibits, exist today in consulting

organizations, technical implementation firms, commercial agencies, academia, service providers etc. This brings us to another set of important questions pertaining to:

1. Why would they associate?
2. How would they associate?
3. Details of Operations, process, quality, delivery etc.

And in order to address these motivations, the nature of association, operational details, we are essentially deducing a “Business Model” where all the respective entities are associated giving rise to a viable ecosystem around the MGD ePortal. Taking cognizance of the fact that policy, planning and execution is generally done at different levels with diverse sets of stakeholders involved, it is important that the entire business model and related mechanisms such as the “Intelligent Engine” are sensitive to these requirements.

It is important to identify the entire value chain of the ICTD projects and based on which interventions may be developed to foster these Projects/Programs and through the MDG eCenter all the stakeholders are linked up suitably, harnessing their capabilities and addressing their motivations.
