

UNIT 1 GETTING TO KNOW ABOUT PLANNING

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1.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- Understand and explain the importance of planning for telecentres
- Identify various components of telecentre planning
- Identify the elements of logistics planning for a telecentre

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit is about getting to know how to plan for a telecentre. Before setting up the telecentre, you will need to plan. Planning is a very exciting exercise.

As you go through various Modules and Units, you will find that whatever has been presented in the curriculum will be useful to you. Sometimes you want to refer back to the various Modules and Units, when you face a problem or a hurdle in your business.

This curriculum has been put together by going through the experiences of various people in the telecentre movement. They have spent many years in setting up telecentres, designing and imparting training to the telecentre operators, creating networks, funding, collecting best practices and working with all the different aspects of telecentres. Many researchers have written about the strengths and challenges of telecentres. You will appreciate that it is good to learn from the experiences – positive or negative – of others.

In this Unit you will learn about the importance of planning and various components of planning in regard to a telecentre. You will learn about what to look for, as you set up the telecentre.

1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING

What is planning? Simply put, planning is looking ahead.

It is the process of **thinking** about the activities required to create the formal procedures used in anything: documents, diagrams, meetings, discussions, important issues to be addressed, and life in general. For planning, you have to think about the goals or objectives to be met, and the strategy to be followed in fulfilling a desired goal.

What should a plan be? A plan should be a realistic or a practical view of the expectations. A plan can be long range, intermediate range or short range. Preparation of a comprehensive plan will not guarantee success, but not having a sound plan will almost certainly ensure failure.

Concept of planning can be extended for almost every endeavors of human activity. There can be planning for your one single day activity also.

Think of one day of your lie. You wake up and you may ask yourself: what am I going to do today? The various commitments, activities and responsibilities that come to your mind are the beginning of your activity plan for that day.

Then, you have to think about how you are going to do the various things you have thought of. After this, you will make a schedule to make sure that these things get done. You may review this list during the day and feel that you cannot complete everything in the list. So, you can move something to the next day. At some point you will have to decide what is important for you to do that day, or move to the next day.

This is planning for your day and everyday of your life. Two important things to remember in this process of planning:

1. On one hand, we need to be prepared for what is ahead, which may mean contingencies (back up plans) and flexible processes.
2. On the other hand, our future is shaped by consequences of our own planning and actions.

A plan can also play a vital role in helping to avoid mistakes or recognise hidden opportunities.

Preparing a satisfactory plan for the telecentre is essential. The planning process enables you to understand more clearly what you want to achieve, and how and when you can do it.

A well-prepared plan or the author of the plan for a telecentre shows that the Manager knows the business and has thought through its development in terms of products, management, finances, and most importantly, markets and competition.

Planning helps in forecasting the future and makes the future visible to some extent. It serves as a bridge - between where we are and where we want to go.

No two telecentres will be the same. Therefore, no two telecentre plans can be the same. It is important to prepare a plan keeping in view the need of your enterprise and its stakeholders.

A plan serves the following three critical functions:

- Helps to clarify, focus, and research development and prospects of the business or the project.
- Provides a considered and logical (sound) framework within which a business can develop and pursue business strategies over a certain period of time - three to five years.
- Offers a benchmark (point of reference) against which actual performance can be measured and reviewed.

Check Your Progress 1

Note:

- a) Please use the space below each question for your answer
- b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit

1. Define planning (in 25 words or less)

2. Name three critical functions of a plan

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

1.3 COMPONENTS OF PLANNING

Now that you know about the importance of planning, we can discuss what is required before a telecentre is established. Among many others:

Logistics, Location, Space

In the beginning, you have to plan for various logistics. Logistics is the management of the flow of [goods](#), [information](#) and other resources, including [energy](#) and people, between the point of origin and the point of consumption in order to meet the requirements of consumers. In telecentres it would mean the management of the flow of everything you need to do to get your telecentre going.

An important logistic is space – where you will house the telecentre – and the location of this space. Then, the kind of space, the area of the premises, various facilities in the area, use of the space, the furniture, lighting, cleanliness, sanitation, etc. You will learn more about this in the next units.

Equipment and Systems

Planning and selection of hardware and software is a specialist’s job. And this choice depends on the type of services you would like to provide at your Telecentre.

In selection of equipment and systems, you have to select the suitable technology. New technologies make new services feasible and these may have relevance to the information and services you would like to offer at the Telecentre. And you will remember there is a cost associated to every technology. So, planning is essential, necessarily for a cost-effective technology, which is suitable for the services planned.

Connectivity

It can be said that Internet connectivity is the ‘life line’ of any Telecentre. Without proper telecommunication connectivity, broadband or otherwise, a Telecentre cannot perform true to its real potential.

In a subsequent Unit 3, we will have a detailed discussion on Internet and the connectivity. Telecom Service Providers have established broadband connectivity in large part of the country, although many thousands of

remote villages are still to be covered. You have to select a location for the Telecentre where some connectivity is available. Although broadband connectivity is most desirable, there are many Telecentres currently operating in India with provision of dial-up connectivity. But remember that dial-up connectivity may not provide adequate data speed, which is required by many applications and services provided by a Telecentre.

Technology is also an important criterion for connectivity selection. However, as a Telecentre Operator or Manager, you have little or no control on the technology through which connectivity is delivered. For a remote place, of course, connectivity may be provided through a satellite, for which again cost of the bandwidth and limitations in the data speed may be the areas of concern.

Basket of Services

A Telecentre has to deliver lot of services, either locally or through Internet. These services are usually identified depending on the community needs. In previous Modules you have learned how community needs are identified - through community needs assessment, etc.

There are many government-to-citizen (G2C) services, which are offered at Telecentres. These are certificates, documents, application forms – which are regular needs of the community. While they may not bring large revenue earning for you, they will bring credibility to your Telecentre.

Many business-to-citizen (B2C) services can be offered at telecentres. In fact, an innovative mind and enterprise will determine the limit in this regard. Remember, there are a huge number of business services which are not available in the remote part of the country. All these services, which can be delivered electronically, are potential candidates for the basket of B2C services.

Planning for content

Telecentre clients will use facility when the information they need (which we call content) is available in a way that is easy to use and meaningful to them. Therefore, planning for content is critical.

Content should be relevant to the community. Your clients are farmers, students, housewives, members of the self-help group, elderly citizens, and small-business people. Content available in your Telecentre should be meaningful for all these people. You will need to ensure that all content has a corresponding business model, because you need to make your telecentre sustainable.

Preparing a Business Plan

A business plan is the first and the last document which will reflect all your thought processes in regard to planning of the Telecentre. It must be prepared in a step-by-step process, starting from defining the Telecentre itself and covers everything: logistics, services, equipment, marketing, management, personnel, organisational structure, service delivery mechanism, budget and financial plan etc.

A Business Plan is required for many purposes including funding applications from donors, funding organisations and also from the government. A well-written Business Plan will reflect all the activities necessary and sufficient for the venture to succeed.

Check Your Progress 2

Note:

- a) Please use the space below each question for your answer
- b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit

1. List 6 components for Telecentre Planning

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____
- iv. _____
- v. _____
- vi. _____

1.4 SUMMING UP

In this Unit we have learned about the elements for planning the Telecentre. The main points are:

- Planning is an essential process for establishing a Telecentre.
- A Plan must be prepared keeping the needs of the community, the enterprise and its stakeholders.
- A telecentre needs a suitable location, ambience, space.
- A telecentre should be effectively equipped with equipment and systems, connectivity, logistics and utilities, suitable for delivering services efficiently.
- Planning for the basket of services and the content is essential
- Developing a Business Plan is a useful and important process which determines the success of the telecentre and supports the planning process

1.5 Check your progress: Model Answers

CYP 1

1. Planning is the process of thinking about the activities and creating the formal procedures used to prepare documents, diagrams, check-lists etc. for the objectives to be met, and the strategy to be followed in fulfilling a desired goal.

2. The 3 critical functions of a Planning are:

- To clarify and focus on prospects of the business, or the project.
- To provide considered and logical framework within which a business can develop and pursue business strategies over a certain period of time - three to five years.
- To offers a benchmark (point of reference) against which actual performance can be measured and reviewed.

CYP 2

The various components for a telecentre planning are:

- Logistics viz. space, utilities, amenities
- Equipment and systems, connectivity
- Basket of services or content
- Business Plan

1.6 DEFINITIONS

1. **Benchmark:** A set of references with which the outputs or outcomes of any activity or process can be compared.

2. **Enterprise:** Any activity, venture, effort or project. Legally, it means a company, established to produce and deliver products and services.

3. **Framework:** A basic conceptual structure used to solve or address complex issues. Also, a general name for a set of definitions and actionable processes prepared keeping in view definite objectives and goals. A framework can be prepared for all activities.

1.7 ASSIGNMENT

1. Make a presentation on the various components of planning for a telecentre.

The presentation could be

1. A 5-7 minute cassette or CD audio recording
2. A video tape (5 minutes)
3. A written essay (1000 words)
4. A drawing
5. A poem
6. A photos essay (with about 10 photos and text)

1.8 GLOSSARY AND REFERENCES

1. A Framework for Designing Telecentres Roger Harris, Roger Harris Associates, Hong Kong, March 2007.
2. www.wikipedia.org: Definitions and References