MODULE 4 PLANNING A TELECENTRE

UNIT 4 PLANNING FOR THE BASKET OF SERVICES

Structure of the Unit

4.0   LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- Understand how to link the basket of services with community needs

- Identify and prepare a basket of services, which can be offered through the telecentre

- Identify and offer services which would generate income for the telecentre

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Now you have a space for the telecentre and an idea how to set it up, the next important step is to prepare a list of services, which you will offer at the telecentre.

'Basket of services' literally means the choices in a basket. For example, if you live in an area where the vegetable or fruit vendor comes to your door, you will see that there are many kinds of vegetables and fruits. So it can be in any area – the basket of services means a diversity or variety or mixture.

Planning for a basket of services would closely link with the existing service delivery eco-system for the citizen. There are **government-to-citizen (G2C)** services, which will bring more people and credibility to the telecentre but it may not bring significant revenue to your kitty. For example, a birth certificate for a citizen may be required only a few times during their entire life period. Original land records or certificates may be required frequently because a bank loan may need the original to be submitted along with the loan applications.

On the other hand, there are many **business-to-citizen (B2C)** services, which the citizen would like to receive periodically. For example, an electricity or water bill has to be paid to every month for the service providing authority. In the Indian context, if you offer booking facilities for railway tickets at your telecentres it is a great service – as that it is a need for millions of people travelling by trains all over the country, every day. Another

important and wanted service is examination results – which are now available electronically. These and other services can be of greats assistance to the community and income generator for the centre.

You can think of many other B2C services and information-base services which can bring regular revenue to the Telecentre.

In this Unit, you will get to know about the basket of services which can be delivered from your telecentre. In the next Unit, you will be introduced to content development. Content and applications also are linked to the basket of services.

4.2 BUILDING THE BASKET OF SERVICES

Think of the basket of services like a menu. It should have something for everybody, or least for any many people as possible.

You have probably been thinking of what services you will offer, when you decided to go into the telecentre business. There are at least **four ways** to approach what services to offer:

1. What the community needs and wants
Typically, in the community needs assessment you will find that people want information about government programmes and schemes, food for work programmes, information related to their main source of livelihood (agriculture, fisheries, industry, trade), health, jobs, training programmes, etc.

2. What you think the community needs and wants
Besides finding out what the community needs and wants (through the Needs Assessment Survey), you also have ideas of your own. As a person who has chosen to be part of the telecentre movement you have more exposure than many others in your community. Also, you will be part of the wider telecentre movement and therefore are more aware of what the possibilities are. Use these resources to generate ideas and test them with people, in and outside your community.

3. What services are already available?
There may be services from government offices, which can be linked. But for other business-to-citizen services, there may be existing telecentres or businesses, which offer the services what you would like to? If that is so, how would what you offer be better (or have a competitive edge)? One way to get clients is to offer something different, better or the same service at a better rate. If people think they are going to get more value out of your services, they will come to you.

4. What will generate income for the Telecentre?
Besides your responsibility to the community, you will need to generate income. Remember, people are willing to pay, if they feel that they are getting some value in return. Almost any service you offer can have a charge – from a small one to a large one.

To recap, when you do a community needs assessment, you will hear about what different people in the community want. But, as you have decided to set up the Telecentre, you will have some ideas of your own. And, if you decide to go in for a **franchisee model** you will be getting information and ideas from the franchiser also.

However, this is a beginning. Each community has some needs that are common to others; and other needs that are unique to it. A good part of your success as an entrepreneur will be to pick up what will work in the community. For example, this could be related to how people make a living (agriculture, fishing), education, health, jobs and careers, communication with family and friends in other places, etc.

4.3 RANGE OF SERVICES

This is a list of services that many Telecentres offer:

1. Education: Computer courses, distance learning courses, vocational training, life skills, etc. These could be distance learning or tutors that you can contract to offer classes at the Telecentre. For example, in India the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) offers 310 courses in about 8 languages.   You can apply to IGNOU to become a centre to offer the courses.

2. Adult literacy: This could include basic literacy and advanced literacy skills, for people in the community who have not had formal education and would like to become functionally literate. There is now voice activated software available for adult learners.

3. Information services: Information related to agriculture, fishery, handicrafts, government schemes, basic rights, weather, market prices, disaster preparedness, etc.

4. Communication services: You could provide facilities such as STD, text and voice mail, fax, telephone, voice and video chat, courier services, to connect the local community with their friends and relatives.

5. Payment facilities: You can set up a payment counter for various utilities like mobile phones, telephones, electricity, water, property taxes, and charge a service fee.

6. e-Governance services: You could register births/deaths and provide application for driving licenses, passport, jobs, etc.

7. Ticket booking: You can offer reservations for bus, train or air tickets at a small service charge.

8. Government update: By working closely with local governments you can update communities on various government programmes and schemes. In return, you can get regular updates from the village about progress on key issues reflecting the development of the village. In India, many rural populations are dependent on government schemes as they are called. Very often, they don't know that they are eligible for the schemes and if your telecentre can offer this information it will be a tremendous community service

9. Market/retail hub: You can act as a collection and distribution point for agriculture and other local products. Also, for key products like mobile accessories, new mobile connections; re-charge coupons, stationery items etc.

10. Disaster information and management: Many parts of the world, especially rural, costal and poor areas are prone to natural disasters such as drought, floods and earthquakes. Through the Telecentre you can give information and raise public awareness about how to deal with disasters. Many countries have Disaster Management Ministries or Committees where you can get information and share it with the community.

11. Market and other research: Many local, state, national and international organisations do research in the rural areas. You could undertake such a project, as you are based in the community. This way, you could generate income for the telecentre as well as give experience and employment to others in the community. This is a good way to develop your own skills, that of the Telecentre and the community. You could advertise this service on the web.

12. Miscellaneous services: The most basic services that people in your community will require are photo coping, digital photography, lamination, job work, desktop publishing and email.

13. Link information with access to inputs: Merely providing information is not enough. Knowledge dissemination should be linked to access the inputs needed to apply the knowledge for economic activities. For example if you are offering information about job openings, then have a link to those organisations. You can also make contracts with organisations that are seeking labour in rural areas and then actively seek to recruit people for them.

14. Video conferencing: You can research, be in touch and keep a register of experts in the fields of medicine, agriculture, animal husbandry, human rights, health and education and organise interactions through video conferencing. This can then, be used to assist the community in their needs to access expertise on the spot, in emergencies and non-emergencies.

15. Collecting, documenting and disseminating local wisdom: There is traditional wisdom in your community. These are stories, practices, and secrets that are passed from one generation to another, often unique to that community. With modernity, much of this knowledge is being lost. This could be knowledge related to:

- Agricultural practices such as seed preservation, pest control, food storage, etc.
- Medicinal properties of flowers, vegetables, herbs, foods, etc.
- Construction and use of organic materials such as mud, hay, manure, etc.
- Practices related to childbirth and nutrition.
- Practices related to animal husbandry, fisheries, etc
- History of the community

By actively engaging with the community, you can create a project to collect this information, document it and disseminate in a way that others –in the community and outside – can use it. You could also make it available on-line or in a CD format to those who would be interested in it, with a service charge that would then go back into the telecentre kitty.

A project such as this could make a major contribution to the enormous wealth and wisdom of your community and ensure that it is shared and passed on to the next generation.

16. Radio and video services: There is a great deal of activity in the community radio world. If someone is doing community radio in your area, you could think about partnering with them. If there is nobody, maybe you could consider starting a community radio station. You could consider investing in a video camera and letting young people in the community learn to use it. The video camera could also be used to document meetings, training sessions (like hardware classes) and get on tape community stories and experiences (as in the section – 15 – above). You could also consult websites to set up your own community radio station. Check out the following site: **www.communityradiotoolkit.net.**

17. Services for children: While most of your clients will be youth and adults, remember that young children will grow up and are your potential clients. Some parents may also need to bring their children with them. Consider providing a space for children – where they can play, explore and have fun. This area could be outside the telecentre building or inside. Consider some natural play elements such as sand, some water, locally made toys. Even some cartoons which they can watch on a screen.

Check Your Progress

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 4 things you need to keep in mind as you decide on what services to offer

   i.   _____
  ii.   _____
 iii.   _____
 iv.   _____

2. List three services that Telecentres typically offer

   i.   _____
  ii.   _____
 iii.   _____

4.4 SUMMING UP

In this Unit, you have learned about various services, which can be delivered from your telecentre. The main points are:

- The basket of services offered by your telecentre should meet community needs
- For the government-to-citizen (G2C) and business-to-citizen (B2C) services, links should be established between the telecentre and the service provider
- Great attention should be given to services which may generate income for the telecentre, to ensure sustainability
- Collecting, documenting and disseminating traditional wisdom of the community is an important service of the telecentre and an income generating activity
- Community radio has a great potential for telecentre growth and community development

4.5 Check Your Progress: Model Answers

CYP

1. The 4 things to keep in mind while deciding which services to offer are:

    1.   What the community needs and wants

    2.   What you think the community needs and wants

    3.   What services are already available

    4.   What will generate income for the telecentre

2. Three services that telecentres typically offer:

    1.   Education

    2.   Information services

    3.   Communication services

4.6 DEFINITIONS

1. Focused Group Discussions

Focused group discussions are held for a qualitative research work when a group of people are asked about their attitude towards a particular product, service, concept, idea etc. It is an interactive discussion in which participants are encouraged to talk to other members in the group and exchange opinions.

2. Market Hub

Market Hub is a place where market information and trading details are made available to the stakeholders. The small traders and producers benefit from the information available with the Market Hub, sometimes going to the Hub physically and sometimes through Internet.

4.7 ASSIGNMENTS

Develop a presentation on various services (keeping in mind the needs and groups in your community) that you will offer in your 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)

4.8 GLOSSARY AND REFERENCES

6 Planning for the Basket of Services

1. Roger Harris. *A Framework for Designing Telecentres*. Roger Harris Associates, Hong Kong. March 2007.
2. http//www.wikipedia.org
3. UNESCO. *The Telecentre Cookbook from Africa.*