

MGP: II.3.3 STRENGTHENING INFRASTRUCTURE: Capacity Building for Project Preparation in Departments

Background

One of the pre-requisites for increasing the focus on infrastructure building would be to enhance the capacity of the Departments to conceptualize, formulate, design and implement projects. This calls for substantial capacity building in Government Departments. There should be in each Department a team of officers who are fully trained in project management tools. These officers can be linked to an agency in the State which provides the necessary support. This would mean that there has to be trained manpower with suitable systems to analyze and evaluate such projects or activities in every sector and at different levels. New systems of procedures and guidelines particularly as a result of new approaches to infrastructure creation like BOOT, BOLT etc. would bring, in its wake, the need for strengthening existing institutional mechanisms.

Proper training and development of manpower alone can ensure that systems respond quickly to emerging demands of project management. The improvement in professionalism in government would be perceived as an indicator of investor friendliness that would encourage investors to come forward. Given the range of players who would have to interact and work together, the specialized personnel in departments/sector should be trained in the management of these relationships also.

There would be a requirement of an apex agency in the state, which would coordinate infrastructure development and would act as the apex body for public private partnerships in infrastructure across sectors. The broad scope of its functions would be overall planning, coordination and monitoring, removal of policy impediments, decision making (granting clearances/sanctions etc.). A continuous learning process at various levels of government would also become necessary. The system itself has to become a 'learning organization' if it has to cope up with the challenges involved.

The apex body would be supported by departmental coordinators who would be considered specialists in the area in the concerned departments, and shall form the fast track teams for these issues. The process of inducing the change in the work force would be an elaborate and time-consuming one. One model which can be thought of for the apex agency to clear infrastructure projects would be a joint venture (e.g. IIP) which is linked through a formal partnership. This model has been successfully tried out in Andhra Pradesh.

Allied to this issue, is the question of using this team of departmental officers trained in project preparation and management for rapidly building projects for availing of Central Assistance and for projects funded through the State's own funds. Here, it may be necessary to keep a pool of funds which can be used by Departments for engaging short term consultancy contracts below a specified amount. This fund may be headed by an account kept under Planning or Administrative Department but administered by a Project Monitoring Committee headed by the Chief Secretary. Such a committee could have the status of an empowered committee with sufficient financial powers. Templates should be built up for assisting Departments to furnish their proposals for project formulation assistance. While the need for the project would not become a matter for consideration of this Committee, the questions whether there are cheaper alternatives would be examined by the Committee before approval.

Objectives

- To build a pool of trained manpower across departments and organizations that can respond to challenges of formulating infrastructure.
- To designate a nodal body for undertaking infrastructure projects formulation and vetting.
- To design a simple system to engage consultancy support for creating projects in Departments.

Methodology

1. Prepare an approach paper for approval of Council of Ministers (**June 2003**)
2. Designate a nodal body for coordinating of infrastructure projects based on the approach paper (**July 2003**)
3. Prepare a Training Needs Assessment in consultation with various Departments (**September 2003**)
4. Implementation of the Training Plan (**December, 2003**)

Outputs

The major outputs of the institutional strengthening process would be

MGP: II.3.3 STRENGTHENING INFRASTRUCTURE: Capacity Building for Project Preparation in Departments

- Change in the attitude of the civil servants
- Better clarity of ideas and actions and result oriented implementation of projects
- Increased Responsibility and Accountability
- Increased efficiency
- Investor friendliness at operational level

Risks

- Difficult transition phase in terms of design and development of capacity building plan
- Misinterpretation of changes
- Lack of initiative from individuals
- Weakening of existing initiative in Departments