

Digitization of Public Services

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Abstract

The efficiency, progress, and expansion of a nation depend on public services. However, there are significant differences in the quantity as well as the quality of public services, partly because of weak institutions, high transaction costs, and information barriers. Growth in the coverage and use of digital technologies, notably information and communication technology has therefore been a positive trend during the past 20 years, especially in isolated rural areas. The main objective of this paper is to explore the E-services provided by the Punjab govt. and find the hurdles in the way of implementation of public services digitally.

Keywords: Digital, government, e- services, public services, Punjab

Introduction

The term "Digital Public Services" or "Digital govt." refers to the delivery of public services through digital technologies in which an IT system mediates communication with a public sector organization. People are always asking public organizations to be more responsive, efficient, and transparent. A major component of governments' reaction to these demands is the growing use of digital technologies, which have the potential to significantly boost the local and national economies. During the Covid-19 outbreak, when people were compelled to shift a large portion of their everyday activities online, the potential advantages of adopting digital public services became even more apparent. In order to ease public access and use, public sector information (PSI) must be made publicly available in open forms. As economies rebuild from the consequences of COVID-19, digital interactions can benefit businesses since they save individuals time and lessen the administrative burden on businesses. All people and enterprises utilize the most advanced digital platform, which offers effective and user-friendly services and applications with strong security and privacy requirements. Digital government services are freely available to all.

At the national level, the government has introduced various digital services such as Aadhaar, UPI (Unified Payment Interface), Digilocker, DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), Government e-Marketplace (GeM), Unified Mobile App for New Age Governance (UMANG) to enhance digital governance and public services delivery. The Punjab state govt. facilitates citizens with 100+ services digitally. Digital Punjab Online portal, eSeva and Connect Punjab are the major platforms where the state govt. provided all the services digitally to ease the public. The predominantly services are likely land record, certificates, and payments. The state govt. also encourages digital infrastructure initiatives such as e-office systems, biometric attendance mechanisms and secure data centers managed by the National Informatic Centre (NIC). Utilizing Sewa Kendras (centers) and standard mobile applications, these platforms strive for a digitally, transparent, and citizen-centered governance approach. As per the Government of Punjab notification dated 15 January 2026, the Punjab Private Digital Open University Policy 2026 was officially approved. The policy establishes a regulatory framework for the development and operation of private digital open universities in the state, with the aim of expanding access to higher education through flexible, technology-enabled learning models. It focuses on promoting online and distance education, improving educational accessibility for diverse learner groups, and encouraging innovation in digital academic delivery while ensuring quality standards and regulatory compliance.

Major E-services and digital services:

- **Aadhaar:** It is the unique Id of every citizen in India estimated 132.92 crore living Aadhar number holders have been issued Aadhar numbers in the country. As per address recorded in Aadhar 3.15 crore Aadhar numbers belongs to the Punjab.
- **eSeva Portal & Sewa Kendras:** The Government of Punjab, through the *eSeva Portal* and a network of 538 *Sewa Kendras*, delivers over 400 digitized citizen services across the state. This integrated service delivery system enables citizens to conveniently access essential government services such as issuance of digital certificates (including birth and death certificates), caste certificates, renewal of licenses, and land record documents such as *Fard*. By combining online platforms with physical facilitation centers, the initiative ensures inclusive access, reduces processing time, minimizes paperwork, and enhances transparency and efficiency in public service delivery.

- **“Faceless” RTO Initiative:** Introduced to modernize and digitize transport-related public services, the *“Faceless” RTO* initiative enables citizens to access 56 transport services online without the need to physically visit the Regional Transport Office (RTO). The platform streamlines processes such as license applications, vehicle registration, permit services, and other transport-related approvals through a fully digital and transparent system. By reducing paperwork, minimizing in-person interactions, and accelerating service delivery, the initiative enhances convenience, efficiency, and accountability in transport administration.
- **mSeva Application:** Implemented as a comprehensive digital service platform, the *mSeva Application* enables the delivery of more than 63 digitized Urban Local Body (ULB) services directly to citizens’ doorsteps. The application includes essential services such as water service billing, property tax management, and other municipal services, ensuring greater convenience and accessibility for the public. By digitizing service delivery processes, the platform minimizes manual intervention, improves operational efficiency, enhances transparency, and provides citizens with a seamless and user-friendly governance experience.
- **Connect Punjab Portal:** Developed as an integrated digital platform, the *Connect Punjab Portal* serves as a centralized system for citizens to track service applications, register complaints, and provide feedback efficiently. The portal was designed to enhance transparency, improve communication between citizens and government departments, and ensure timely resolution of public grievances. By offering a user-friendly interface and real-time status updates, the platform strengthens citizen engagement and promotes responsive and accountable governance across Punjab.
- **Bhagwant Mann Sarkar Tuhade Dwar:** Since January 2026, the Government of Punjab has been delivering 437 citizen-centric services directly at residents’ doorsteps through the *Bhagwant Mann Sarkar Tuhade Dwar* initiative. The program was launched to enhance public convenience, improve accessibility to government services, and reduce the need for citizens to visit government offices. By leveraging digital systems and streamlined administrative processes, the initiative ensures faster service delivery, greater transparency, and improved efficiency in addressing public needs across the state.

- **Agrinet Punjab:** Agrinet Punjab is an e-Governance initiative of the Punjab Government's Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. It uses information and communication technology (ICT) to provide agricultural information and services to farmers, improve communication between the government and farmers, and make agricultural administration more efficient. It offers information on crop production, weather, market prices, fertilizers, pest control, and government schemes. Agrinet helps farmers receive timely information, improves transparency, and ensures efficient delivery of agricultural services.

Recent Digital Initiatives (on or after 2025-26)

- **Digital MC House:** Spearheaded the implementation of a comprehensive digital governance platform aimed at modernizing and streamlining the operations of the Municipal Corporation Patiala. The system was designed to digitize administrative workflows, improve record management, enhance transparency, and facilitate efficient communication between departments. It also enabled faster processing of citizen services, reduced manual paperwork, and supported data-driven decision-making for better urban governance and public service delivery.
- **eSansad Initiative:** Introduced in the Punjab School Education Board and Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU), Amritsar, the *eSansad* system facilitates secure digital verification of academic and official documents. The initiative is designed to streamline authentication processes, reduce reliance on physical documentation, and curb fraudulent practices. By enabling real-time online verification, it improves efficiency, enhances transparency, and ensures the credibility of issued certificates and records across educational institutions.
- **Mandatory Digital Payments:** The policy mandates the adoption of electronic payment systems, including QR codes and card-based payment machines, across service points to promote cashless transactions. Under this directive, refusal to accept digital payments is subject to penalties, ensuring compliance among service providers. The initiative aims to strengthen financial transparency, reduce dependency on cash, curb leakage in

transactions, and encourage widespread adoption of secure and efficient digital payment methods.

Hurdles in digitization of public services:

Due to the inadequate and insincere efforts of the Punjab Government, e-Governance projects have not achieved complete success in their implementation. Although numerous e-Governance projects are being operated across the state, the government has not been able to effectively deliver these services to all citizens. Public participation in accessing these services remains low because many people are unaware of the facilities offered through these projects. In some cases, citizens are not even aware of the existence of certain projects.

It can be hard to navigate public services. Users must visit multiple websites or agencies for each service, and information on how to access facilities is frequently provided in bureaucratic language that is difficult to grasp. Applications commonly call for the printing and signing of physical copies of supporting documentation, and many online forms are equally difficult to finish as the paper counterparts. Additionally, consumers often need multiple profiles and digital IDs to handle their demands, and the user encounter tends to differ across government websites. This is all very different from what was anticipated.

A major challenge in implementing e-Governance is ensuring the privacy and security of the personal data that citizens provide to access government services. Since e-Governance systems store and process sensitive information, there is a risk of data breaches, cyber attacks, and unauthorized access.

One of the major challenges in implementing e-Governance in India is the limited use of the English language among many citizens. Since most e-Governance applications are developed in English, a large section of the population finds them difficult to understand and use. As a result, these projects may not achieve their full potential.

Recommendations:

To improve the effectiveness of e-Governance initiatives, the number of service centers should be increased, particularly in rural areas, so that people living in villages can easily benefit

from these services. Furthermore, the government should organize awareness campaigns and outreach programs in both rural and urban areas to educate citizens about the available e-Governance services and encourage greater participation. Such efforts would contribute significantly to the successful implementation of e-Governance initiatives.

In addition, the state government should collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that can play an active role in spreading awareness and motivating citizens to make effective use of these services. Through increased accessibility, awareness, and public participation, the goal of successful e-Governance implementation can be achieved.

An increasing number of people believe that public services shouldn't be more difficult than online buying. They desire to be accessible to locate the most pertinent services fast. They anticipate completing all transactions through digital channels—ideally, in a single digital journey—and want information in plain, uncomplicated language. By combining digital channels, governments can offer a smooth customer experience. People might navigate and receive data and amenities based on life or professional requirements in one location rather than visiting several websites or apps.

To avoid the breaching of personal data of the beneficiaries, effective security measures such as data encryption, strong authentication, regular security audits, secure data storage, and strict privacy policies must be implemented to safeguard citizens' personal information and maintain public trust in digital government services.

E-Governance applications should be developed in local and regional languages so that people can easily access government services and fully benefit from them. This will improve accessibility, inclusiveness, and the overall success of e-Governance initiatives. It is necessary to increase public digital literacy and promote the usage of digital services while making sure that everyone has access to them. Boost managerial efficacy and professional digital abilities at all levels, and make sure teams reflect a variety of professional backgrounds. Recruiting and retaining digital talent in a systematic manner is crucial, as is providing them with an engaging and adaptable work environment that fosters autonomy and both professional and personal development. Additionally, teams should be better funded as projects and encouraged to rotate and innovate. In this context, the adoption and usage of digital technology may provide

significant benefits by improving the accessibility, convenience, and efficiency of services. National governments have implemented numerous projects to deliver public services through digital means.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the digital govt. in Punjab has significantly transformed the delivery of public services, making them more efficient, transparent, and accessible to citizens. The state's adoption of digital platforms, including online portals, mobile applications, and automated systems, has streamlined bureaucratic processes, reducing the time and effort required for citizens to access essential services. Moreover, digital govt. has contributed to increased accountability by improving the monitoring and evaluation of government functions.

Despite these achievements, challenges such as low digital literacy, poor internet connectivity in rural areas, concerns about data privacy and security, and resistance to change among both officials and citizens continue to limit the full potential of e-Governance. To overcome these barriers, the government should invest in digital infrastructure, promote digital literacy, strengthen cyber security measures, and provide services in local languages. With continuous improvement and citizen participation, digital govt. can play a vital role in achieving transparent, inclusive, and citizen-centric governance in Punjab.

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