CHAPTER 36

Service and Payroll Administrative Repository for Kerala—SPARK

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ABSTRACT

SPARK is a G2E web based Personnel Administration and accounts software for Government of Kerala covering 5.25 lakhs employees. Permanent Employee Number for all employees is allotted through the system. Every department in Government has an establishment section to manage the human resources. The entire service information of an employee working in the sub-ordinate service (NGO) is maintained in the service book of the employee and is retained with the respective office in which the employee works at any given time. The service information of State Service (Gazetted) employee is maintained in the Entitlement Register and retained with concerned section at A.G office. When a non-gazetted employee is transferred and gets posted to another office, the service book is transferred to the new office whereas the Entitlement register is always kept at AG office. The establishment section mainly deals with Payroll, updating service book of the employees, preparation of gradation list, drawing up promotion list based on respective eligibility and reservation criteria, transfers and postings of employees and sanctioning of leave benefits as per directions laid down in the Kerala Service Rules. At present there is no way in which information from these books can be brought together to help decision making. There is no unified data or source of data for details about the employees who draw their pay from the Government.

A centralized integrated computerized personnel and payroll information system will help the government to get details of any employee immediately, achieve highest level of transparency in dealing with the employees, more consistent application of rules etc. On the payroll side, accurate and automatic payroll processing is facilitated. It also ensures that the rules and regulations are uniformly applied to all employees thereby achieving better employee relations.

The system addresses all requirements in service, salary, income tax and accounts matters. Centralized database helps in quick decision-making and applying rules and regulations uniformly for all employees. Activity driven procedure linked data capture is ensured. All reports are generated in PDF format. Provision is available to send alert messages to employees, when payments are credited. Provision to generate Identity Cards is another facility.
1. Introduction

Project Conceptualization

Government of Kerala has accorded high priority for the implementation of e-Governance in the departments for the effective and efficient administration and service to the people of the state. It has further realized that the mere usage of IT alone is not sufficient and has decided to revamp the administration through massive changes. It is evident from the fact that the Government has incepted a new department for modernizing Government Programs. The modernization will certainly pave the way for using IT in Government programs there by making e-Governance a reality. It is in this context the government has decided to implement an Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System in its departments. This system helps not only the employees but also the management.

2. Project Vision, Stakeholders, Objectives and Services

There are over 5,25,000 employees working in more than 100 Government departments, several schools and colleges in Kerala State Government service. Every department in Government has an establishment section to manage the human resources. The entire service information of an employee working in the sub-ordinate service (NGO) is maintained in the service book of the employee and is retained with the respective office in which the employee works at any given time. The service information of State Service (Gazetted) employee is maintained in the Entitlement Register and retained with concerned section at A.G office. When a non-gazetted employee is transferred and gets posted to another office, the service book is transferred to the new office whereas the Entitlement register is always kept at A.G office.

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A centralized integrated computerized personnel and payroll information system will help the government to get details of any employee immediately, achieve highest level of transparency in dealing with the employees, more consistent application of rules, etc. On the payroll side, accurate and automatic payroll processing is facilitated. It also ensures that the rules and regulations are uniformly applied to all employees thereby achieving better employee relations.
The system has been developed with a view to cater to the administration, payroll and accounts matters of all Government establishments. A centralized integrated computerized personnel and payroll information system will help the departments to get details of any employee immediately, achieve highest level of transparency in dealing with the employees and can have more consistent application of rules.

- Changes made in one module will be reflected in all related areas of activity
- On the payroll side, accurate and automatic payroll processing is facilitated
- Rules and regulations are uniformly applied to all employees
- Avoids complaints
- Achieves better employee relations

The stakeholders of SPARK project are Government of Kerala, Treasury, AG’s office, establishment sections, employees, Kerala State IT Mission and National Informatics Centre.

3. Public Private Partnership (PPP)

SPARK project is fully owned by Government of Kerala.

4. Necessity/Needs

There are about 5.25 lakhs of employees working in the Kerala Government departments and the details about these employees are available in service books maintained in about 50,000 offices. At present there is no way in which information from these books can be brought together to help decision-making. There is no unified data or source of data for details about the employees who draw their pay from the Government. Moreover various requirements of employees are delayed for want of the availability of information at various decision-making points.

5. Project Plan

Requirements of Process Re-engineering and Legal Framework

Not much of business re-engineering was attempted initially. However it was decided to incorporate Permanent Employee number (PEN) for all Employees. Thereafter changes have been incorporated in a demand-driven manner. For example, when it was decided to adopt on-line filing of property returns, competent authority ordered necessary changes. The concept of demand-driven BPR has been adopted without affecting the initial database creation.
Technology Architecture

The SPARK Data center is a multi-layer architecture and has been designed to adhere to the industry standards and is optimized for hosting SPARK application. The architecture is represented below. The SPARK data center is the core of the SPARK application infrastructure. This will be used to house the main servers. These servers are protected from the other zones by firewalls.

Fig. 1

Platform/Technology used in the project: Windows 2003 Server, SQL Server 2000, SQL Reporting Services, and ASP.NET

6. Milestones

Project goal is to implement the SPARK software centrally covering all departments under Govt. of Kerala. The following milestones are envisaged.

- Design and development of the web enabled SPARK application software with modules for managing personnel data and payroll.
- Pilot implementation at Govt. Secretariat
- Roll out to line departments
7. Project Management Structure

SPARK is a joint venture of IT Department, Finance Department and National Informatics Centre. Ownership is entrusted jointly with IT and Finance Departments. Kerala State IT Mission is the implementing agency. A co-ordination Committee and a Technical Committee are functioning for guiding, reviewing and assisting the project implementation. KSITM implements the project with necessary consultations with the above committees, Finance Department, Accountant General’s Office, NIC and the departments were SPARK is being implemented.

8. Implementation

Strategy for Pilot to Roll Out

As pilot phase, the project has been successfully implemented at government secretariat, Trivandrum having about 5000 employees. After the success of the pilot phase, the project is now in the roll out stage. As of now more 85,000 employees from different departments of Kerala has been covered under SPARK.

The state wide implementation of the project is being done by Kerala State IT mission. NIC provides necessary software support and consultancy for this project. NIC maintains the project by developing the new requirements as and when required. NIC also provides training to master trainers identified by KSITM and the participating departments. These master trainers further impart training to large number of staff. Workshops are arranged by KSITM and NIC to sort out issues and problems whenever necessary.

9. Evaluation and Measurement

The IT audit wing of Accountant General and audit findings intimated has recently audited the product. Corrective and preventive actions have been incorporated based on this.

10. Issues and their Solutions

Lessons Learnt – Critical Success Factors, Failure Factor

- A strong application software (Pilot phase at Govt. Secretariat was a success).
- Commitment from Government (Government has decided to roll out this product to all departments)
• Availability of data (Data with respect to about 85,000 employees have been entered so far).
• Connectivity (All the Departments/Offices are going to be connected through KSWAN which will ensure the reach).
• Training (The key officials need to be trained in using the application)

To accommodate all departments and offices under SPARK, Internet connectivity with proper bandwidth is required in all offices. Most of the offices are in remote villages where provision to provide connectivity is very less.

Now Government of Kerala has initiated a network, KSWAN, which will cover all offices together in a network, which will be completed within six months.

Replication in other States

The project has been further brought out as a product entitled ‘Personnel administration and Accounts for Central Establishments (PACE)’ for implementation in any Government Establishment.

Road Ahead

• Online data sharing between departments, treasuries and the AG’s office
• Norms-based transfer
• Vacancy forecasting
• Pension database maintenance
• Forecast the expenses on wages for planning
• ‘What if analysis’ on the expense on wages for various variations on allowances
• Analysis on pensioners for the next 5–10 years

11. Status and Results

Present Status

After the success of the pilot phase, the project is now in the roll out stage. As of now more 85,000 employees from different departments of Kerala has been covered under SPARK. Interoperability with Finance department (treasury) data has been initiated.

• Specific achievements during the year 2006–07: Pilot implementation in Government secretariat was a tremendous success.
• Future plans for readers seeking more information on project

Please visit the site http://info.spark.gov.in for information about the project. Please visit http://spark.gov.in to access the application.