

SEVOTTAM

Executive Summary

Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC) is the nodal agency implementing indirect tax laws across India. It has taken a multi-path approach towards citizen centric tax administration reorienting from regulation to facilitation.

CBEC has benchmarked its services and their delivery is facilitated through different paths: (a) Citizens' Charter creating transparency and accountability, (b) Use of Technology creating easy access to services and grievance redress, (c) Dedicated Centers providing single window facility and information and (d) Quality Certificates building confidence of citizens.

Overall CBEC has taken a dynamic approach towards quality delivery through business processes re-engineering.

A Tax-Payer-Service system is an important pillar for an efficient revenue administration. The system serves the premise that certainty of applicable tax and procedures flows into assessee's voluntary tax compliance. The voluntary compliance lowers the 'cost of collection' with fewer resources allocated to control tax evasion, leading to an efficient revenue administration.

To maintain this premise, the Tax-Payer-Service system needs first to understand assessee's needs and next to put processes in place to fulfill those needs. It is important to recognize that assessee's needs pertain to current areas of work like filing of return, shipment of cargo or registration, as well as pertain to non-current areas of work like executed bonds and bank guarantees, refunds and so on.

CBEC journey towards Tax Payer Services:

CBEC has been implementing Tax-Payer-Service system at different levels. Regional Advisory Committees and Public Grievance Committees have been in operation to attend to assessee's needs as well as for trade facilitation. Moreover 'Public Relation Officers' have been earmarked in each Commissionerate whom assessee could reach out to with their needs. 'Help Centers' have been set up at each Commissionerate to guide assessee on tax matters. Both current and historic information is made available to assessee via CBEC web site. Some Commissionerates provide electronic forums for assessee queries via Commissionerate web site. Large Taxpayer Units have been in operation to provide single window facility to specific segment of assessee.

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Further a 'Citizens Charter' has been in place wherein CBEC has set norms of timeliness for specific services to increase transparency and accountability. A few Commissionerates like Gurgaon CX and Ahmedabad Customs have been ISO 9001 certified setting higher benchmarks for quality. ICES and ACES systems have been in operation providing online access to services in Customs, Central Excise and Service Tax.

Sevottam – structured improvement in Tax Payer Service:

As a further improvement in system for Tax-Payer-Services, CBEC has been implementing SEVOTTAM project to deliver excellence in service delivery. SEVOTTAM is IS 15700: 2005 certifiable standard.

SEVOTTAM is a Service Delivery Excellence Model which provides an assessment-improvement framework to bring about excellence in public service delivery. The model works as an evaluation mechanism to assess the quality of internal processes and their impact on the quality of service delivery.

The SEVOTTAM model seeks to assess an organization on (i) implementation of the Citizens' Charter, (ii) implementation of grievances redress system and (iii) service delivery capability. This assessment is made through three modules.

The first component of the model requires effective Charter implementation thereby opening up a channel for receiving citizens' inputs into the way in which organizations determine service delivery requirements. Citizens' Charters publicly declare the information on citizens' entitlements thereby making citizens better informed and hence empowering them to demand better services.

The second component of the model, 'Public Grievance Redress' requires a good grievance redress system operating in a manner that leaves the citizen more satisfied with how the organization responds to complaints/grievances, irrespective of the final decision.

The third component 'Excellence in Service Delivery', postulates that an organization can have an excellent performance in service delivery only if it is efficiently managing well the key ingredients for good service delivery and building its own capacity to continuously improve service delivery.

Sevottam targets assessee's stated as well as implied needs:

Sevottam gives framework to understand and address assessee's stated needs as well as implied needs.

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Sevottam targets stated needs like

- **Timeliness:** time norms for specific services are enumerated in Citizens' Charter. The services and norms are set as per active discussions with different stakeholders.
- **Effectiveness:** a single window system for service deliverables is targeted for delivery to cut down on assessee's shuttling from one desk to another to get services.
- **Responsiveness:** a robust grievance redress system is needed to listen to assessee's grievance as well as redress them timely.

Sevottam targets implied needs like

- **Courteous behaviour:** norm for behaviour, specially in assessee's facing positions, is described in the Citizens' Charter and pro-active feedback on service delivery is gathered to judge this.
- **Information:** facilitation centers and help centers are targeted to meet assessee's needs of information.
- **Empathy:** public grievance officers are needed to listen to assessee's in their time of need.

Tools for facilitation and Tax Payer Services:

- Discern: Promise what you can deliver. Keep focus on high value services for assessee's and deliver them as promised.
- Automation: Automation allows timely and faster turn around for delivery of a service
- Dedicated centers: This allows ground level focus on a single window facility for specific or all assessee segments.
- Smooth processes: Simplification of procedures allows responsive and reliable services
- Database: A robust database allows better assessee management with faster transfer of data as well as quick cross checks. It allows better information sharing leading to trade facilitation.

Steps towards SEVOTTAM:

We have taken concrete steps towards SEVOTTAM. We have worked on each SEVOTTAM module to assess ourselves, identify gaps and make improvements. Accordingly we have

a) Revised Citizens' Charter: We have revised our Charter as per input from key stakeholders to make it 'Citizen Aligned'. We have demarcated our vision,

"To provide an efficient and transparent mechanism for collection of indirect taxes and enforcement of cross border controls with a view to encourage voluntary compliance".

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We have defined our regulatory and service functions. We have also redefined our service standards and norms with specific norms set for 10 services. The revised Charter has been approved in December 2008 and circulated to field formations for implementation.

b) Implemented CPGRAMS as robust grievance redress: We have adopted CPGRAMS (Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System) at all India level. This is monitored at Chief Commissioner/Director General level at field formation. This is also monitored at Board level. Public Grievance Officers have been nominated at field formations. Norms of acknowledging complaints and of providing final replies have been set in Citizens' Charter to handle public grievance.

c) CBEC is now Sevottam (IS 15700) certified: The certification process is an independent evaluation of our service delivery performance. Four pilots have rolled out Sevottam and have been IS 15700 certified on 4th November 2010 for 3 years. These pilots are Directorate general of Inspection on behalf of CBEC as Apex office, and three unit offices at Delhi I Central Excise, Delhi Service Tax and Delhi Customs (Import & General).

As apex office the office of the Director General of Inspection is handling design issues in SEVOTTAM implementation. Unit office of Delhi Customs (I&G) is an outlet that established norms and infrastructure for Customs service delivery. Unit office of Delhi –I Central Excise established norms and infrastructure for Central Excise service delivery. And unit office of Delhi Service Tax established norms and infrastructure for Service Tax service delivery.

Key performance indicators for improved service delivery have been identified as timeliness, single window service deliverables, information cum facilitation centers, proactive citizen feedback and effective & timely grievance redress. Internet and telephone technology have been identified as the way to e-service and m-service.

d) All India helpline: Board has approved to have an all India helpline to harness technology for citizen information and facilitation. The helpline aims to provide information to citizen any time and from anywhere in India via one all India toll free phone number and email channel.

The helpline shall be established in near future. This shall add-in to the current system of information and facilitation already working at various field offices.

e) Sensitized field formations: Change in officer's mind set from administration to public service has been identified as a big challenge in developing service delivery capability. To address this, a mini team under the leadership of Director General of Inspection has conducted workshops at Delhi, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Patna, Kolkata, Shillong, Bhubaneshwar, Hyderabad, Bhopal, Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai to appraise senior officers on CPGRAMS and SEVOTTAM. Further SEVOTTAM training

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has been structured through NACEN and NITS (BIS training academy). 2 to 3 day courses have been held at Noida, Faridabad, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai, Bangalore, Jaipur and Kanpur. Training calendar is in place to replicate these trainings in other locations and on a need basis.

f) Established CBEC Service Quality Manual: A service quality manual has been prepared incorporating the key learning at pilots on how to deliver and sustain quality in services. The manual has built on IS 15700 requirements to capture latest research and best practices in the field of service delivery. A service quality policy along with quality objectives and complaint handling objectives has been laid out in the manual to fulfill our commitments to citizens in the Citizens' Charter.

The manual is publicly available and could be downloaded from DGICCE web site (<http://dgcice.nic.in/sevottam.htm>) Our Customers can use the manual to understand CBEC Citizens' Charter, Service Quality Policy and key service deliverables. The Charter contains key services that CBEC is committed to offer to customers in a time bound manner and CBEC's expectation from customers. The service quality policy lists CBEC commitment to enhance customer satisfaction. The service deliverables are defined so citizen knows what to expect. Further the customers can use the manual to know CBEC's organizational structure to approach the right officer to take decisions and to implement policies. For sustained service delivery CBEC has put in systems for Customer Grievance Redress and Information & Feedback.

The road ahead:

The Service Quality Manual collates the key learnings to replicate SEVOTTAM implementation in other formations. 20 more unit offices have been chosen in October 2010 for phase II expansion.

This shall be extended to all other formations building upon the experience gained. Implementation of SEVOTTAM is a key deliverable in CBEC Results Framework Document.

Finally continuous improvement is essential for sustained quality delivery. As such we shall periodically review our Citizens' Charter to dynamically incorporate new citizen expectations. Cost of uncertainty and delay are built into the price of goods and services. This impacts global competitiveness of Indian industry as well as adds to inflation with increased prices in domestic sector.

Overall with SEVOTTAM we are systematically strengthening our Tax Payer Services.