

Development

Positive

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EVOLUTION

Facilitating change
for a better tomorrow

Foreword

India has made monumental improvements in all sectors, while being one of the fastest growing economies with a substantially growing GDP. Set to scale to USD 5 trillion by 2025, India Inc. is leaving behind geographical boundaries and expanding the scope of a better life for its citizens.

The reform efforts for resolving grassroots level problems are taking shape even with a global pandemic disrupting the world, which compounded gigantic challenges pertaining to capacity, equity, quality, access to available resources, etc., with the tertiary sector of the country witnessing phenomenal expansion.

India is a rising star as a destination for international students. At this point, India's goals of easing access to higher education among all students in the country, maintaining accomplished students at Indian institutions and captivating students from foreign lands, all start with formulating and strengthening its higher education system. The government's efforts towards the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 have constructed the path for the country to progress.

From April 2000-March 2022, foreign direct investment (FDI) equity inflows were calculated at USD 7.72 billion. Further, 89 universities from India made it to the Times Higher Education Emerging Economies University Rankings 2022. In July 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spearheaded a three-day *Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam* in Varanasi with an objective to debate over the implementation of NEP 2020 and its further expansion across the nation amongst various stakeholders.

The Indian Railways is another sector earmarked for an overhaul. Through the years, there have been significant changes in how people book train tickets. The Government of India, with an aim to ease the process of ticket booking and resolving customer grievances, decided to modernise the Passenger Reservation System (PRS) – an online portal for ticketing and seat reservation in trains. For optimal results, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) focused on the four essential pillars of travellers' experience –

personal, mobile, seamless and secure – strengthening the core application and backbone infrastructure of the PRS.

With a contribution of 4.7% to India's GDP in 2020, even though the COVID-19 pandemic had slowed the world down, tourism has played a prominent part in keeping the Indian economy afloat. A kaleidoscope of varied landscapes, India's geographical diversity and tourism products like adventures, eco-tourism, etc., make it a preferred destination for tourists and employment seekers alike. The industry also encourages the development of infrastructure facilities. The Government of Haryana's project to create a safari park in the foothills of Aravali in Gurugram and Nuh, is a push in this direction. The effort also allows biodiversity conservation while providing tourists with an exceptional experience.

To realise the vision of focused development across sectors, a crucial pillar in the Indian economy is sports. With schemes like *Khelo India*, National Sports Awards, Pension to Meritorious Sports Persons, National Sports Development Fund and others, multiple deserving sportspersons are able to take up sports professionally and represent the nation at an international level. The 36th National Games being held in Gujarat are a testimony to the exemplary work of the Indian government.

The core of our work is fulfilling the dream of shaping a vibrant Bharat. We aim to concoct strategies that create an ecosystem for growth. A wide range of service offerings in sports, travel and tourism, education, infrastructure, technology, advisory and other sectors enable us to actualise our goal.

This newsletter takes you closer to Grant Thornton Bharat's recent engagements in multiple sectors and how the impact of our actions is yielding sustainable results.

Sources: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1250204/india-contribution-of-travel-and-tourism-to-gdp/>
<https://www.investindia.gov.in/sector/tourism-hospitality#:~:text=India%20is%20estimated%20to%20contribute,to%20be%20achieved%20by%202030.&text=In%20FY20%2C%20tourism%20sector%20in,total%20employment%20in%20the%20country>

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“Grant Thornton Bharat has been working relentlessly to contribute to the higher education sector. We have made extensive contributions to the Madhya Pradesh Higher Education Quality Improvement Project (MPHEQIP) to improve quality of higher education in the state. Through the project, the education outcomes for students in higher education government institutions were improved and the effectiveness of higher education system in Madhya Pradesh was also expanded.”

Abhinav Sisodia, Director, Public Sector Consulting

“Grant Thornton covered the proposed roadmap towards revamping the existing PRS with all required technical solutions - advanced AI, BOT, Blockchain, cloud, etc. We studied citizen complaints and feedbacks, assessed the existing PRS for risks and also examined various acts and laws for the legal requirements of the new PRS system. By implementing our proposed modernisation roadmap, Indian Railways would be able to provide world-class travelling experience and technology to its customers up to the next 50 years.”

Puneet Agarwal, Director, Public Sector Consulting

“Tourism plays a multidisciplinary role in the development of a Vibrant Bharat. It connects geographies, people, and communities. At Grant Thornton, we support government institutions on framing long-term and holistic visions for the development of tourism in the country. Our endeavour is to ensure sustainable tourism focused on quality services and community development.”

Tejinder Gupta, Executive Director, Public Sector Consulting

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Modernisation of the Passenger Reservation System (PRS) of the Indian Railways

Addressing passenger travel challenges



India has the fourth-largest rail network, with over 22,593 operating trains (9,141 freight and 13,452 passenger). Indian Railways, a statutory body working under the Ministry of Railways, Government of India (GOI) looks after 64,000 route kilometre (RKM). Increased urban migration and better income have resulted in the passenger segment growth, transporting almost 23 million people in over 13,000 trains daily.

Notably, every second, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) books 970 tickets and handles 12,000 enquiries. It also offers 441 services, such as on-board catering services, etc., to the passengers. However, the system is prone to challenges, which impacts user-experience.

“
Self-reliant India is based on five pillars – economy, infrastructure, system, demography and demand.
”

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India



Key challenges in ticket booking and financial transactions

Payment settled;
ticket not booked

Refund

Website/TPA error,
failed payment,
captcha issues

User experience issues

- Profile update
- Choice of seat
- Unavailability of seat locking
- Seat availability status out of sync between PRS and front-end



Supporting IRCTC, the #GTWay

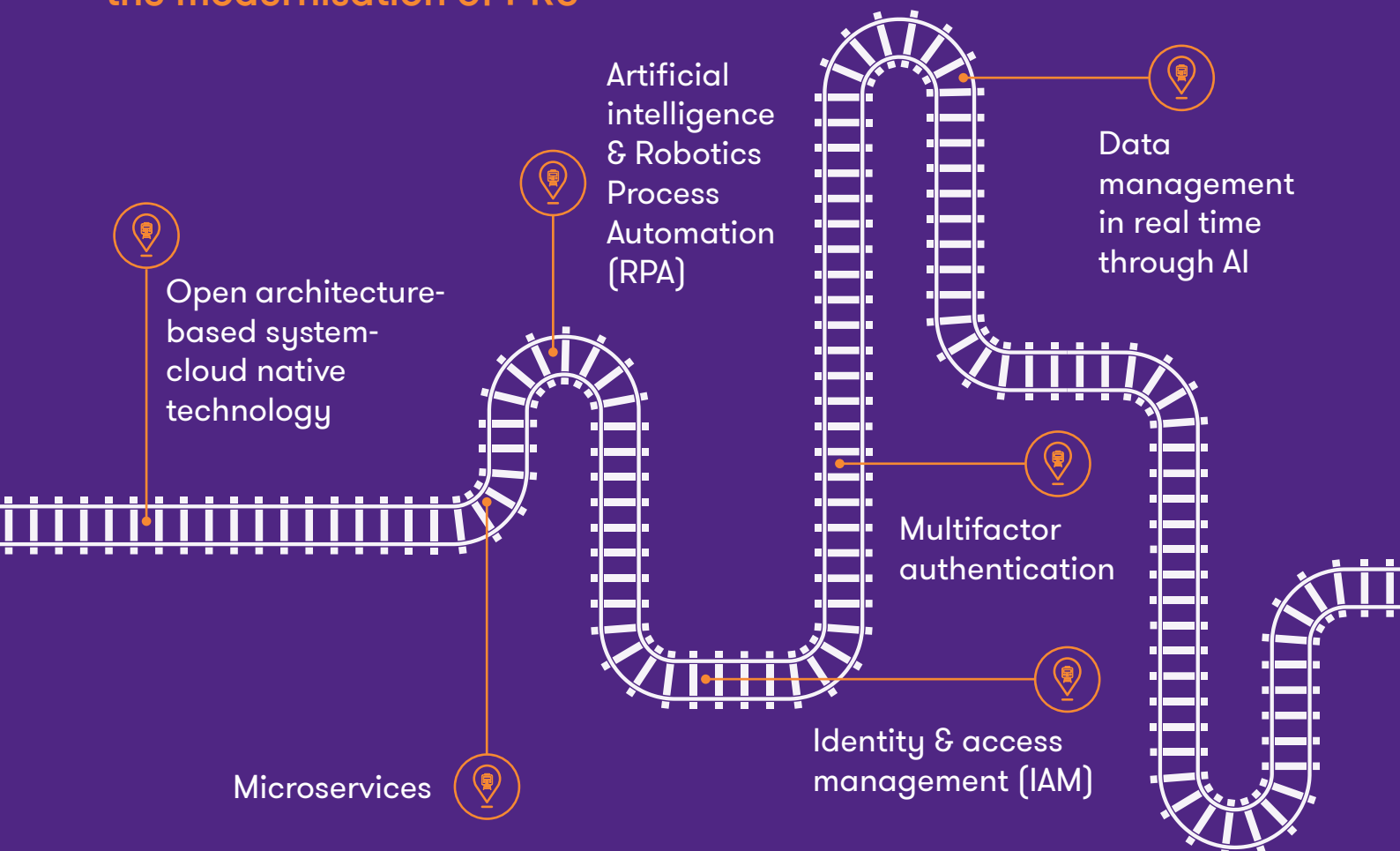
IRCTC has taken many initiatives to improve customer experience. However, we identified several services that are yet to be offered to the citizens. Real-time seat availability at all stages, changes in existing booking/seat preferences, monthly price calendar, increase in baggage allowance, planners and returns were some of the prominent areas that needed work.

Grant Thornton Bharat proposed additional services to improve the standards for train travel business and improve customer experience.

Google Re captcha V3 was implemented on the website and mobile app (Android and iOS). With image-based Google Re captcha V2, NLP captcha was also implemented. Post facto analysis was done regularly to identify bot users.

Our suggested services include ticket integration, modernisation and revamping of the PRS, multi-model transport, multi-operation ticket booking, last-mile connectivity planning, tourism service, cartage booking, discounted rail card and bot detection methods.

Technology suggested for the modernisation of PRS



A seamless travel experience for passengers: Positive outcomes of the recommendations by Grant Thornton Bharat

User experience: Visible improvements in the user experience through dynamic pricing, real-time traffic passenger flow, promotional offers as per behaviour, automatic redressal of complaints and process automation.

Third-party integration: Multi-service providers with the option to book the retiring room adds to the convenience of the passengers. They can avail this service from a few hours to a few days in advance. The implementation of railway navigation and multi-train operations adds to the ease of travel for those who want to continue their journey to different routes.

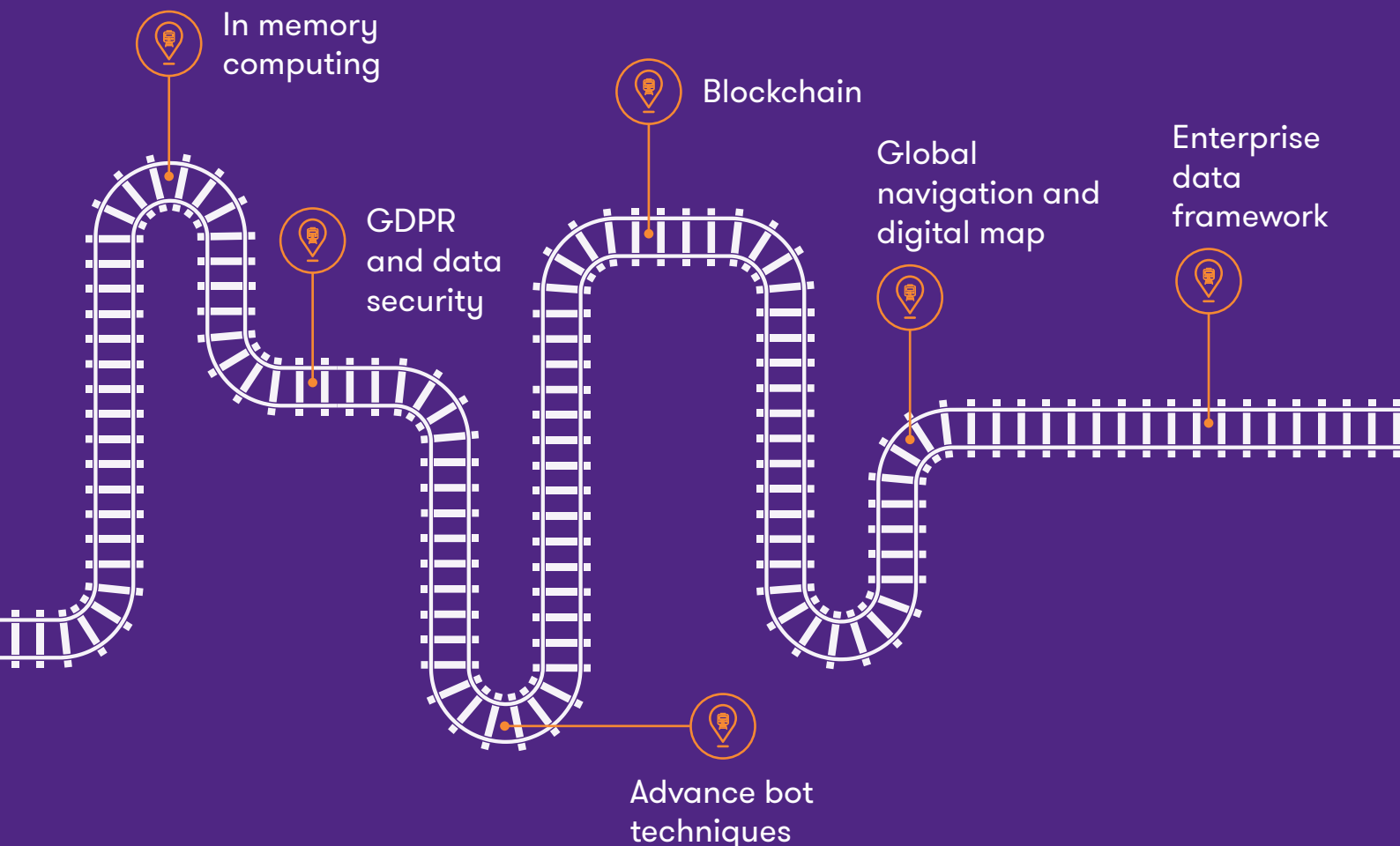
Preventing touting: To prevent touting, multi-layer use of authentication, such as protection to all access points, browser validation, multifactor authentication, device finger printing, ticket scalping and reputation analysis has been implemented by the IRCTC.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML):

Revolutionary application of both AI and ML for online bookings had a multi-dimensional benefit for passengers, with an access to seat availability in real time, seats selection, faster booking, locking and smart ticketing.

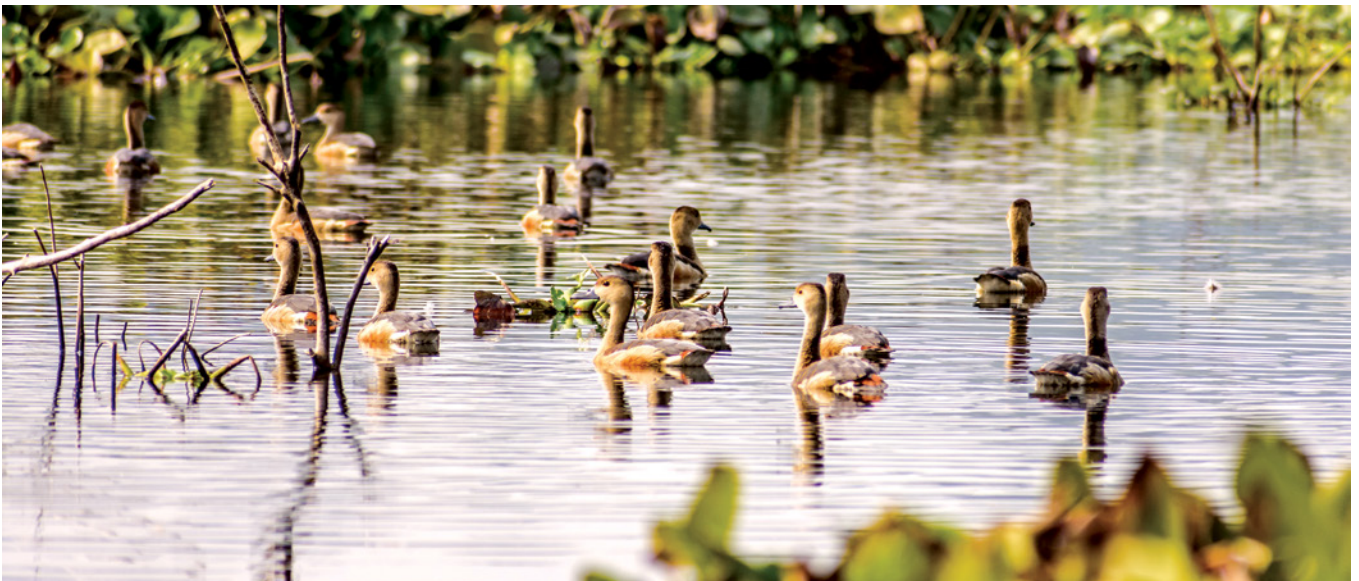
A varied range of user-friendly applications means convenience for passengers and an increased revenue for the Indian Railways. The enhanced experience has resulted in an increased inflow of passengers. The streamlined and secure online ticketing system has enabled the IRCTC to align its huge network of trains effectively. We, at Grant Thornton Bharat, have contributed to building a vibrant Bharat by filling the technical gaps for a stronger economy.

Next generation ticket booking experience: After the implementation of the suggested changes, the IRCTC will be able to cater to customer demands for the next 20 years, along with advanced service experience by means of latest technologies.



Facilitating tourism for Haryana

Promoting tourism in Haryana through India's largest (>10,000 acres) and first-of-its-kind eco-friendly safari park



The hills in the southern districts of Gurgaon and Nuh in Haryana are a part of the oldest mountain range in the world – the Aravalis. To conserve the biodiversity of Aravali Hills in the state and ensure protection of an ecologically sensitive zone, the Haryana government has earmarked an area of 10,000 acres for the creation of a safari park. This will be the largest facility in the world, dwarfing the world's current largest safari park in Sharjah, which is spread over 800 hectares and is home to more than 120 species.

While the terrain of the Aravalli Hills poses many challenges, it also provides great opportunities for the establishment of a world-class safari park and eco-tourism. The area has the potential to yield immense conservation and landscape preservation benefits. Its location (National Capital Region) offers easy access and no paucity of visitor footfall.

Project at a glance

- Habitat components for animals (including integrating engineering, forestry, botany, zoological elements)
- Services such as eco trekking
- Recreational facilities (children's play areas, open air theaters, landscaped gardens)

- Adventure activities (zip lining, etc.) for visitors
- Wildlife specific components (including canopy safaris, aquariums, aviaries, etc.)

Grant Thornton Bharat's role in range conservation

After thorough research, our team developed the strategy for the implementation of the project. This was followed by preparing a detailed Expression of Interest (EOI) for the shortlisting of suitable private players with prior international experience of designing, operating and maintaining similar facilities.

The project was extensively marketed by Grant Thornton Bharat and a proactive outreach strategy was adopted to create awareness and peak interest in the market.

Our approach attracted the attention of major global players who have been key partners in the designing and operations and maintenance of some of the world's best similar facilities at Singapore, Dubai and Sharjah. Proposals submitted by these players have been evaluated by an expert committee and the best proposals have been finalised for the next stage of a detailed master plan for the project.



Elevating education standards for better learning outcomes

Creating a launchpad for the Madhya Pradesh higher education system

In Madhya Pradesh, higher education is a moderately prioritised sector similar to school education, technical education and medical education. The higher education department of the state has 500+ government colleges, 800+ private and aided institutions, with around 10-12 lakh students in the ecosystem.

The sector was extremely impacted by the lack of civil infrastructure, laboratory equipment, IT labs and smart solutions for teaching (smart classes, e-content, language labs). In addition, the sector is also affected by the lack of teachers' capability to adopt advanced teaching solutions, manual database management, lack of association for industry exposure of students, limited research facilities, marginal sports facilities and others.

The lack of facilities impacted the overall performance of students, questioned the transition rate, on-time graduation and their employability.

The gross enrolment ratio (GER) of the state was suffering. To overcome these issues and bring reform in the education sector, the Department of Higher Education, Madhya Pradesh, prepared a detailed project proposal to get funding from a donor agency. It was submitted to the Government of India in 2014. The proposal highlighted all the areas where urgent interventions were essential. It was vetted by the government and a request for funds was raised to the World Bank.

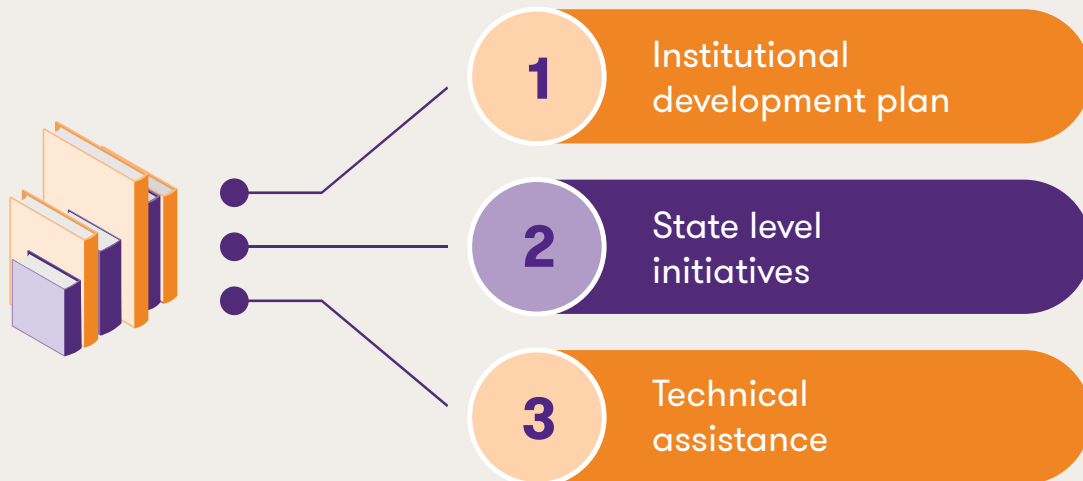
To execute the assignment, the Department of Higher Education floated an EOI and shortlisted eligible firms for a request for proposal (RFP). Grant Thornton Bharat was one of the shortlisted firms during the EOI and was selected as a project management consultant (PMC) through an RFP in 2018 to manage the Madhya Pradesh Higher Education Quality Improvement Project (MPHEQIP).

The project value was agreed on USD 430 million in a 70:30 ratio, where 70% was earmarked for the World Bank and the remaining 30% was expected from the state government.

Adding the high in higher education

As a project management consultant, it was our key responsibility to finalise the approach for project implementation and provide supervisory services for smooth execution. We assisted in shaping and implementing the plan across state, divisional and district levels.

Three major components of implementation plan



Our focus was on designing an online software module for the collection of requirements from government colleges, providing multiple rounds of trainings to college officials on how to utilise online interfaces and populating requirements against various categories, such as civil infrastructure, IT, procurement, social inclusion, academic excellence, environmental support, etc.

Key initiatives and support provided by our team of experts

- Monitoring construction/renovation work
- Implementing in-house project portal/modules for online monitoring and administrative and academic audit
- Setting-up an advanced business intelligence platform for dashboards and evaluation
- Assisting for accreditation under National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), proposal layout, vetting and implementation support to establish centres of excellence (COE) at state universities
- Standardising chart of accounts, training of accountants and principals and support in implementation of dual accounting software at 200 government colleges
- Selecting the agency for the implementation of integrated IT portal, including learning management system and monitoring

Our achievements

- Successful implementation leading to phase II funding opportunity
- Increased enrolments in the ecosystem and improved graduation/transition rates
- Established civil infrastructure for colleges without buildings and refurbished infrastructure for existing buildings
- Administrative and academic audit showing actual status and preparedness of colleges for the NAAC
- Enhanced usage of IT infrastructure, tools, BI platform and portals
- Reduced manual efforts and online data management with an integrated IT portal
- Alignment with *Atmanirbhar* Madhya Pradesh vision and National Education Policy 2020
- Conducive environment for girls, students from rural areas, Scheduled Caste (SC)/Scheduled Tribes (ST) students through facilities and remedial classes
- Implementation of governance benchmarking practices at grant supported colleges



Judega India Jitega India: Smooth planning and execution of the 36th National Games

Supporting the Gujarat government to organise the 36th National Games in record time

Gujarat is hosting the 36th National Games 2022 from 29 September to 12 October. The much awaited games have returned after seven years, with the last edition organised by the Kerala government in 2015. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple other reasons delayed the event till this year. As the gap widened, the government of Gujarat and the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) together decided to host the games in Gujarat this year, in a short span of three months.

Challenges at bay

The National Games are India's biggest multi-sport, multi-venue event with 36 sports disciplines and all states and UTs participating from across India. This edition's theme is – Celebrating Unity through Sports. The biggest challenge faced by the Sports Authority of Gujarat was the time constraint of three months and managing procurement worth INR 300 crore

to organise the event successfully. Since Gujarat has never hosted any such grand sporting event at a national level, the government faced numerous challenges, including finalising the venues and field of play as per the games' technical conduct, and logistical planning and organisation.

Grant Thornton Bharat to the rescue

Due to successful participation within three similar projects (*Khelo India Youth Games Haryana* and *Khelo India University Games Odisha* and *Karnataka*), Grant Thornton Bharat came on board after its nomination as the project management unit for the 36th National Games.

Our team was also actively involved in:

- Overall budget allocation, procurement strategy and bid process management
- Accommodation, catering and transportation planning for over 10,000 participants
- Infrastructure, equipment and overlays planning for all the 36 sports disciplines
- Internal audit and contract management
- Assisting in the games management system and registration of participants
- Event-day operations planning, volunteer and protocol management



About Grant Thornton Bharat

Grant Thornton Bharat is a member of Grant Thornton International Ltd. It has 6,500+ people across 15 offices around the country, including major metros. Grant Thornton Bharat is at the forefront of helping reshape the values in our profession and in the process help shape a more vibrant Indian economy. Grant Thornton Bharat aims to be the most promoted firm in providing robust compliance services to dynamic Indian global companies, and to help them navigate the challenges of growth as they globalise. Firm's proactive teams, led by accessible and approachable partners, use insights, experience and instinct to understand complex issues for privately owned, publicly listed and public sector clients, and help them find growth solutions.



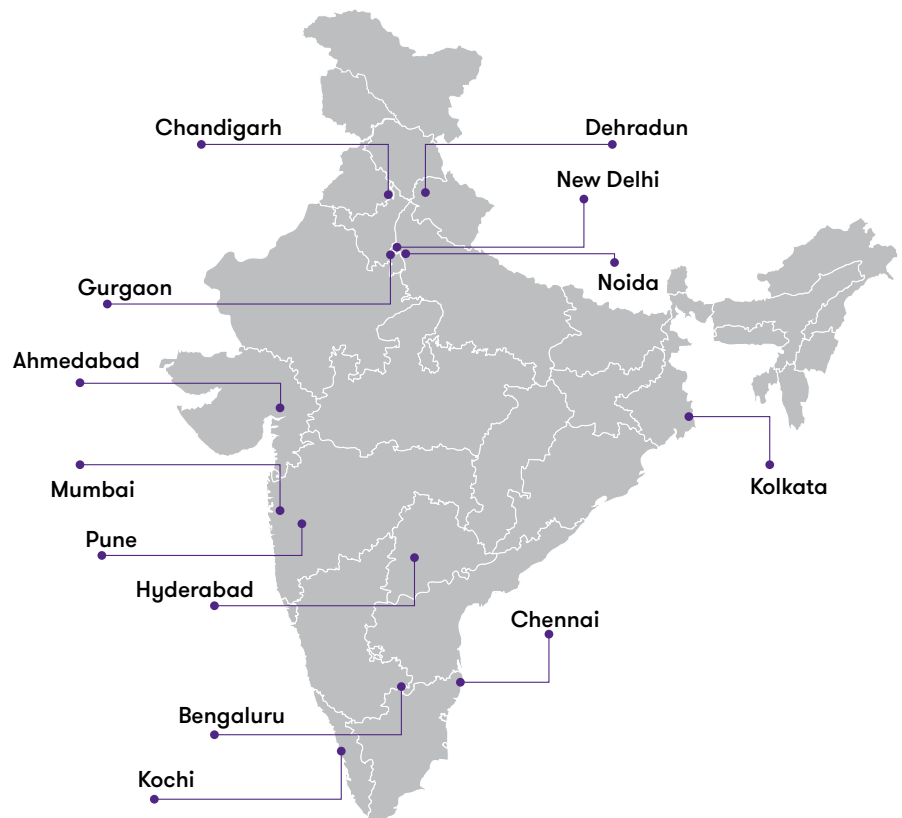
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people



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13 locations



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Advisory, Technology
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To know more about how we can make a **Development Positive** impact, connect with us at GTBharat@in.gt.com



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