



SAKARMA

A decision support system in local bodies through archiving of decisions and follow up actions.

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Abstract

The application 'Sakarma' is thought of as a generic system for District Panchayats, Block panchayats, Corporations and Municipalities. A Decision Support System (DSS) can hardly function in district panchayat presently since no consolidated information on their corporate functioning is readily available. For the same reasons it is not possible to have models to aid decision making and to answer questions like what if ?. **Sakarma** is a non conventional strategy to build up a decision support system starting with an archive.

1.0 Introduction

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments have endowed on the local bodies extensive functions relating to economic development and social welfare. The local bodies in Kerala, in this context, following the people's plan initiative, have transformed themselves into major institutions involved in development and social welfare decision making.

The conventional decision making in district panchayats today are not backed up by data, and alternatives are quite often not discussed. Therefore, in such a context, nobody would be courageous to talk about decision support systems even though there is plenty of scope for one. The objective here is to archive the decisions being made, to start with, and thereafter identify semi-structured and unstructured problems. Finally we could end up with evolving decision models for solving such problems. For doing this the DSS application shall have at its disposal, information on various



functional areas within the organisation which shall also be compiled parallelly.

2.0 Methods and materials

The decision archive envisaged, works out to be a simple document management tool in practice, which will manage a variety of electronic documents, mostly word documents, which form part of agenda notes of the meetings and are originated from the section, handling the meetings of the district panchayat and various other statutory bodies at the district panchayat level, and from the various district level offices transferred to the district panchayat. The plethora of problems to be dealt with, arising from the need of maintaining multiple copies of the same document and identifying the authoritative version is avoided by permitting only final versions of the documents into the archive.

The major advantages of the system in day to day operations would include

- Faster and more effective retrieval of information than is possible with paper systems.
- Preservation of corporate memory.
- Reuse of precedent documents with little modification
- Templates for handling documentation of similar nature

However, beyond a conventional documentation management system the application shall archive the context of the documents also and the document together with the context would emerge as the building blocks of the decision archive which later could evolve into a decision support system.

The application piggy backs on the workflow application 'Soochika' which tracks file movement from the tappal section to various locations within the



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office, recording the author, the user and the changes made at each stage along with the time and date. However, unlike ordinary files which are handled by the workflow application the DSS maintains contextual information of the files linked to decisions taken at various meetings.

The process 'decision support system' has been divided into eight sub processes as could be seen in the process diagram1 (See figure 1). Among the sub processes the sub process 'conduct of meeting' can be sub divided into six sequential processes starting with preliminary activities and ending with disposal. See process diagram 1.1 (Figure 2). All these processes are similar for the seven institutional bodies covered in process diagram 1.1.1 (See figure 3). The institutional bodies are further classified functionally depending on type as in table 1.

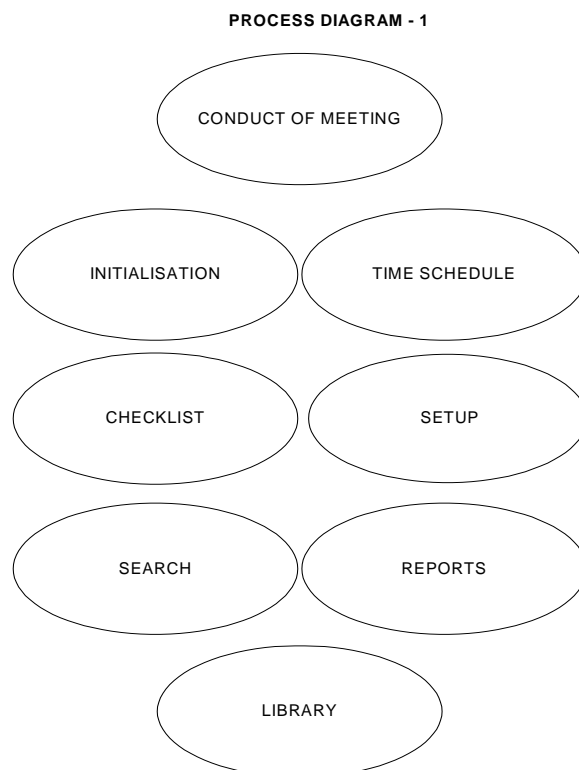


Figure - 1



Table 1

PROCESS DIAGRAM - 1.1.1

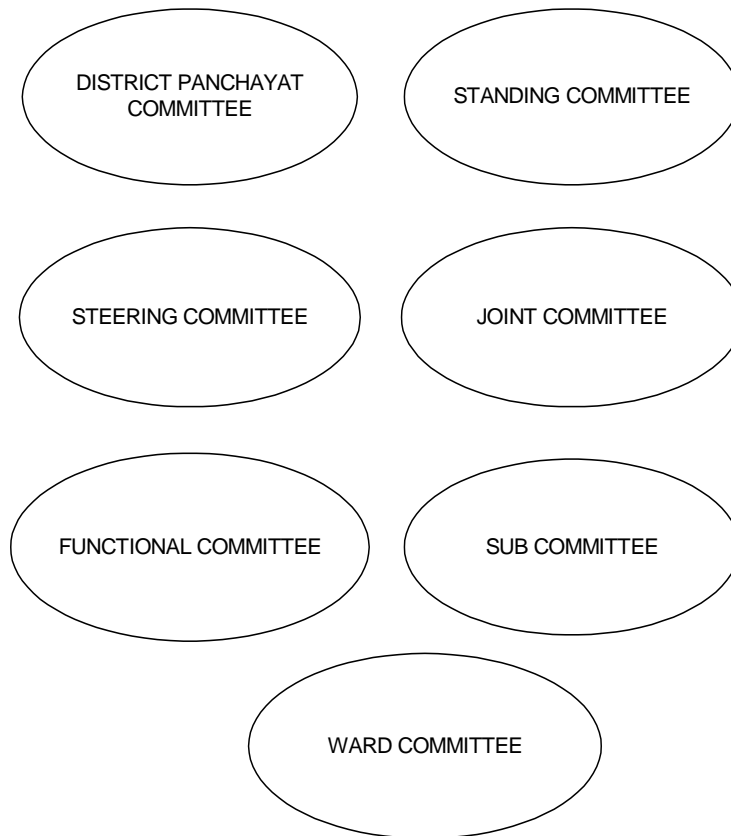


Figure - 3

Sl. No.	Name of Institutional Body	Sub Group	Micro Group	Code
1	District Panchayat Committees			DTF
2	Standing Committees	I. Finance		FSC
		II. Development		DSC
		III. Public Works		PSC
		IV. Health and Education		HSC
		V. Welfare		WSC



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Sl. No.	Name of Institutional Body	Sub Group	Micro Group	Code
3	Steering Committees			SGC
4	Joint Committees	I. Joint Committee not involving Local Bodies from other district	Involving Block Panchayats only	NOB
			Involving Grama Panchayats only	NOG
			Involving Block Panchayats and Grama Panchayats	NBG
			Others	NOT
			Involving District Panchayats	NDF
		II. Joint Committee involving Local Bodies from other district	Involving Block Panchayats	IOB
			Involving Grama Panchayats only	IOG
			Involving Block Panchayats and Grama Panchayats	IBG
			Involving District Panchayats, Block Panchayats and Grama Panchayats Others	IDG
		5	Functional Committees	I. Agriculture and Allied Sections
II. Flood mitigation and prevention of soil erosion				FFS
III. Industries				FIS
IV. Environment				FEN



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Sl. No.	Name of Institutional Body	Sub Group	Micro Group	Code
		V. Education, art, culture and sports		FEA
		VI. Health and allied items		FHA
		VII. Social welfare		FSW
		VIII. Mother and child care		FMC
		IX. General Economic Services		FGE
		X. Energy		FEY
		XI. Transport		FTT
		XII. Public Works		FPW
		XIII. Others		FOT
6	Sub Committees	I. Programme		SPM
		II. Project		SPT
		III. Works		SWS
		IV. Others		SOT
7	Ward Committees	Ward # ¹		WC# ¹

The decision support system involves two archives viz.

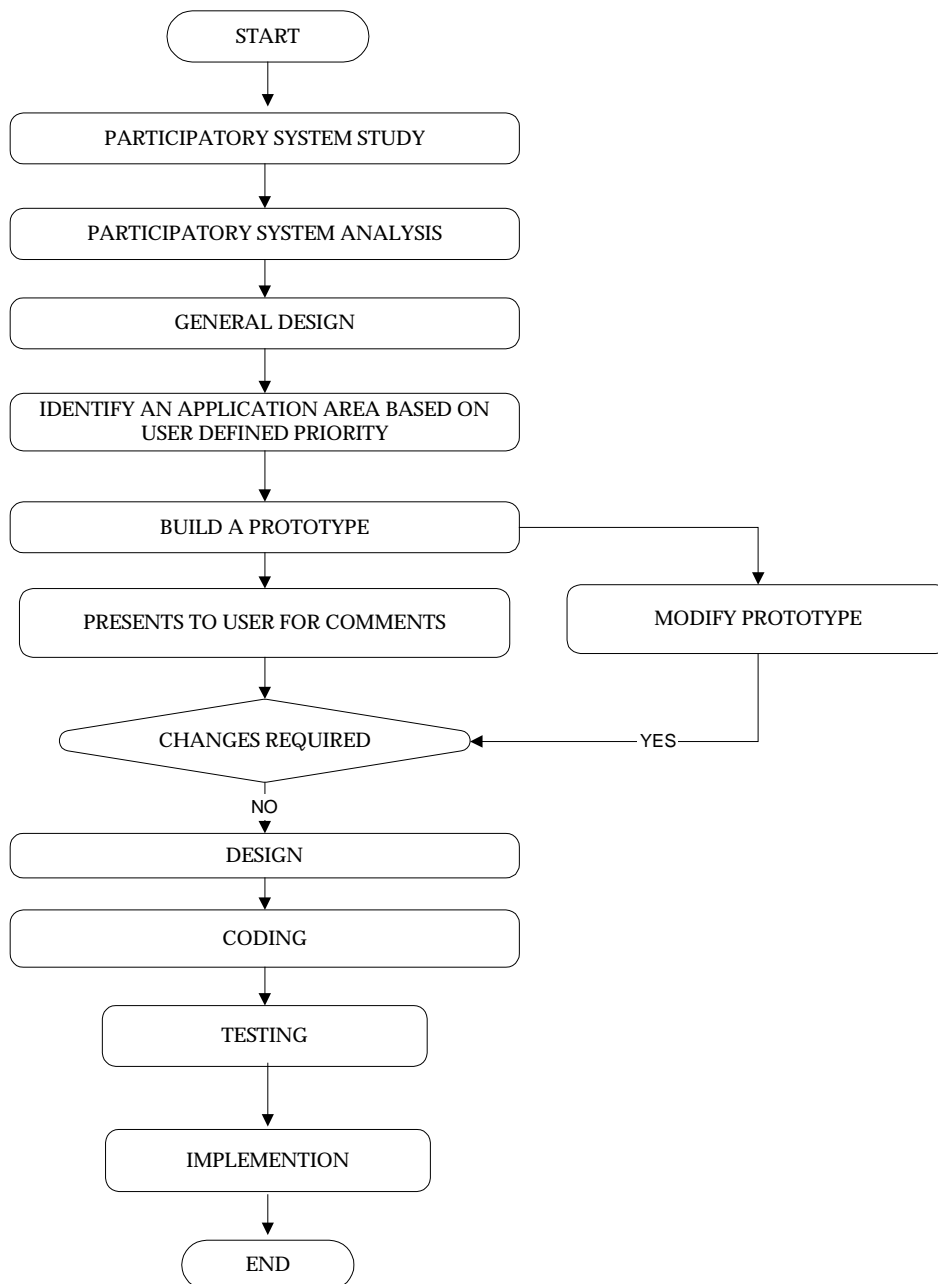
1. Normal items archive
2. Additional items archive

The additional items archive are further classified into

1. Routine items archive
2. Special items archive



The normal items archive, covers the items identified for a meeting, through the normal sequence of events starting with the collection of agenda notes and followed by the issue of notice of the meeting. However the additional items archive involves



¹ Indicate ward number

Figure 4



items which are routinely passed on for approvals and authorisations and

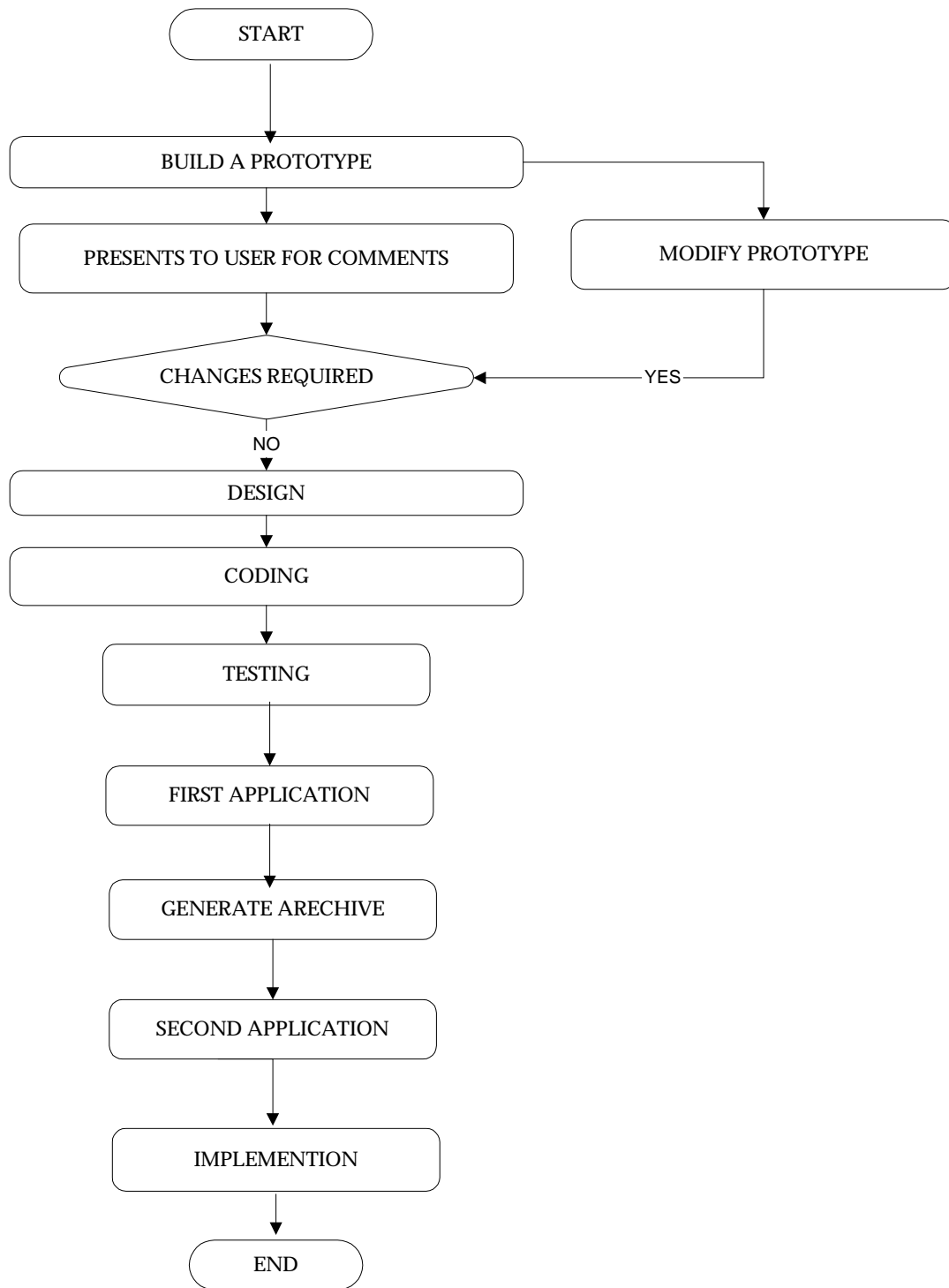


Figure 5



items which are specially referred to a meeting for guidance and advise.

The time scheduling for decision support system is driven by a calendar, generated based on the frequency of the meetings, determined by the provisions of the Acts and Rules, governing the functioning of the institutional body. The checklist covers the statutory guidelines to be fulfilled for organising the meeting. The set up procedure prepares the masters, the search system facilitates access based on a query system, and the reports system, and permits document retrieval.

The application has a series of templates - a few of them to record information pertaining to access of documents and the rest relating to the document formats - say for instance, formats for minutes and agenda notes. These formats are for the time being, too trivial and generic in nature. A library of templates shall be created subsequent to implementation and used continuously which could lead to further improvement in standardisation of documents. If found useful these could be later on incorporated into subsequent versions of the DSS.

The application development of DSS shall be using the Participatory Technology Development strategy evolved for IKM. Outlined in figure 4. In DSS, the methodology has been revised as shown in figure 5.

3.0 Conclusion

Decision Support Systems are professional tools available to the manager in taking decisions in complex situations. The manager in a district panchayat can structure the decision making system in his organisation conveniently using '**Sakarma**'. Success of this strategy would be relevant in the long run in developing strategies for building Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) modules for e-governance in the State.