

I. INTRODUCTION:

The Government of Sikkim places Information Technology and its enabled services and electronics and telecommunications sector high on its agenda. This Policy has been formulated to put the sector as the critical thrust area for growth, employment and transformation of the governance in the State.

II. VISION STATEMENT:

- a) To establish brand Sikkim as IT/ITeS electronics and telecommunications hub and preferred destination for IT/ITeS/Electronics and Telecommunications Industry.
- b) Imbibing Information Technology as catalyst for the socio-economic growth and development of the State by converging all sections of the society.
- c) Facilitating Micro Small and Medium Enterprises as key drivers of Growth, with special focus on indigenous Start-Up's, more particularly the business run by women entrepreneurs.
- d) Forging industrial collaboration and Partnerships at domestic and global level.
- e) Skilling youth through ICT tools as well as augment local talent/skills for IT/ITeS Electronics and Telecommunication industries.
- f) Use Digital Learning to promote education in the State.
- g) To support and propagate excellence in innovation and research and development in the field of IT/ITeS/Electronics and Telecommunication.
- h) To enable User Centric, Result oriented Efficient & Effective E-governance from the overall social development of the State.
- i) Use Technology to strengthen the allied employment generating service sectors including Tourism, Agricultural, Health and Education through Information Technology.

III. POLICY OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the IT Policy of Sikkim are as follows:

- a) To set up the Institutional Framework to implement and monitor the IT/ITeS, Electronics and Telecommunication Policy.
- b) To provide adequate infrastructure (viz land, power, bandwidth, human resource etc.) in the State so that the IT/ITeS, Electronics and Telecommunication sector can flourish.
- c) To establish convergence for effective E-Governance resulting in transparent and quality administration empowerment of citizens and facilitation of government employees.
- d) To provide doorstep delivery facilities of all Government services to the citizens, businesses, employees and all stakeholders through single unified e-service portal.
- e) To create a State Command Control Center to facilitate monitoring of all programme's & schemes of Central & State Government implemented in the State.
- f) To reduce the digital gap rising from technological advancement and to promote investments and growth in IT/ITeS, Electronics and Telecommunication industries and encourage private initiative in IT sector including start-ups and MSMEs.
- g) To encourage IT literacy and education in the State.
- h) To create Information Technology Investment Regions (ITIRs)- Special Economic Zones (SEZs), Electronic Manufacturing Clusters, IT Parks under Government of India and Government of Sikkim schemes wherein investment in Public Private Partnership mode would be encouraged.
- i) To focus, inter alia, on Digital infrastructure, Big Data Analytics, Financial Services, Mobile Applications, Health Services, Fintech, Agriculture, Education Material, 3D Printing ,Digital Entertainment, Gaming and Animation, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality Artificial

- Intelligence ,Robotics ,Drone Technology ,Internet of Things (IoT),Block Chain,Cyber Security,Cyber Forensic Data Science and Industry 4.0 to prepare the State for the future.
- j) To make IT service from the State to be leveraged on the national/ international circuit.
 - k) Information Technology to bring succor to the differently abled.
 - l) To promote innovation, Intellectual Property creation along with original content creation for new product and unique services offering.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK:

a) Apex Committee:

Apex Committee comprising of Hon'ble Chief Minister as Chairperson, other members including Minister-in-Charge, IT, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department, Development Commissioner, Planning Department, Secretary, Land Revenue Department, Secretary, Information Technology Department as Member Secretary.

The terms of reference of Committee shall include Advising & recommending to the cabinet on legal reforms required for the IT/ITeS, Electronics and Telecommunications industrial developments for onward action ,through the State Legislative Assembly; Advising on vision and roadmap of the State on the establishment and growth of IT/ITeS/Electronic and Telecommunication section in the State; Approving of the substantive policies in the area of IT/ITeS, Electronics and Telecommunication including industrial thrust policy and policy on E-Governance and Right of Way policy; Recommending the cabinet on land bank availability and its acquisition for IT/ITeS/Electronics and Telecommunication manufacturing and services industries establishment; resolving inter departmental co-ordination issues which are escalated by the Steering Committee; resolving implementation issues at all levels where Steering Committee escalates the case; undertaking any other issue deemed fit by the Government commensurate with the mandate of the Committee. **The Committee shall meet at-least once in a year.**

b) Steering Committee:

Steering Committee shall comprise of Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) as Chairperson , member of State Legislative Assembly nominated by Apex Committee as Co-Chairperson and other members including Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department, Revenue Secretary, Secretary Planning Department, Secretary, Information Technology Department , Officer on Special Duty, Chief Minister Office, State Informatics Officer, National Informatic Center, Director, Information Technology as Member Secretary.

The terms of reference of the committee shall include advising either suo-moto or on request from the Apex Committee or Government, matters relating to vision and road map of the IT/ITeS/Electronics and Telecommunication; monitoring and evaluating the accomplishment of the vision and road map of the IT/ITeS/Electronics and Telecommunication; facilitating the implementation of the policies pertaining to the IT/ITeS/Electronics and Telecommunication; facilitating implementation of guidelines issued by the Department of Telecommunication, Government of India from time to time in connection with IT/ITeS/Electronics and Telecommunication; vetting projects before submission to funding agencies; supporting resource mobilization in the area of IT/ITeS/Electronics and Telecommunication. **The committee shall meet as often as required but at least twice in a year.**

c) Advisory Committee:

Advisory committee constituting of one Member of State Legislative Assembly as Chairperson and other members including Secretary to HCM, Officer on Special Duty, Chief Ministers Office, Representatives of IT/ITeS, Electronics and Telecommunication Industry, Representatives from Civil Society includes association, academician, NGOs and other stakeholders and Director, Information Technology as Member Secretary.

The terms of reference of the committee shall include support and advise to the Government in all regards in terms of innovative suggestion, feedback on better service delivery system, feedback on progress report and support the Government decision in smooth

implementation under the IT policies. The committee shall be responsible to submit the report to the Government through Chief Secretary, Government of Sikkim. **The committee shall meet as often as required.**

d) Project Based Committees:

The Government shall set up Project based committees as and when required specially when an international or Central Project is approved. For the central project on Bharat Net ,a project based committee namely the “State Broadband Mission” is constituted where by the Chief Secretary, Government of Sikkim shall be the Chairperson and other members including PCCF-cum-Pr.Secretary, Secretary, DIT, Secretary, Energy & Power department, Secretary, Urban Development Department, Secretary, Roads & Bridges Department, DDG or Director stationed at Gangtok, Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications, GoI- Member CGM, BSNL,CGM, BBNL, Representative from COAI (Cellular Operators Association of India) and Representative from TAIPA(Tower& Infrastructure Provider Association.

The terms of reference of the said committee shall include advising, either suo-moto or on a request from the Governing Council or Steering committee on the matters relating to accomplishment of the objectives of the Mission concerning the State, facilitating implementation of the guidelines issued by the Governing Council or Steering Committee enabling expansion of broadband services for the socio-economic development of that State, addressing all matters regarding Broadband Readiness Index (BRI); and monitoring and evaluation of the work of Mission pertaining to the State.

e) Project Monitoring Consultant /PMC:

A Project Monitoring Consultant shall be hired to support Department of Information Technology for:

1. Overall improvement of structures for enhanced efficiencies.
2. Creating system enterprise architecture.
3. Integrating various departments of the Government of Sikkim through IT enabled governance structures.
4. Measure and monitor effectiveness of various IT initiatives in the state.
5. Developing the plan of action including timescale and resources required.
6. Developing independent project in various departments for effective business implementation.
7. Map the state and central and international resources in implementation of listed projects.
8. To diagnose challenges and list opportunities in IT integrates.
9. Vetting of various IT projects from all Government departments.
10. Create a resource person database.
11. Any other work as would be entrusted by the three (03) Committees of Institutional Framework and Secretary, Information Technology.

V. DEFINITIONS:

- a) DIT means Department of Information Technology, Government of Sikkim.
- b) “IT Software” means any representation of instruction, data, sound, and image including source code and object code recorded in a machine, readable form and capable of being manipulated or providing interactivity to use by means of automatic data processing machines.
- c) "IT/ITeS Service" is construed as any service which results from the use of any IT software over a system of IT products for realizing the value addition viz Call Centers, Medical Transcriptions, Back Office Operation/Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)/ Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO), Revenue Accounting and other ancillary operations, Insurance claim Processing, Web/Digital Content Development /ERP/Software and Application Development/GIS, Enterprise Software Development, Enterprise Cloud Architecture,

HIS/HMIS, Financial and Accounting Processing , HR & Payroll Processing Bioinformatics, IT/Office automation, Science, Big Data, Deep Learning, Quantum Computing, Analytics, Legal Process Outsourcing (LPO), IT enabled banking, non-banking services including insurance, pension, Asset Management and market related services, IT enabled gaming, animation (2D/3D/VFX), filming using digital platform and multimedia services, Depository and Security registration and dematerialization services. Big Data Analytics, Financial Services, Mobile Applications, Health Services, Fintech, Agriculture, Education Material, 3D Printing, Digital Entertainment, Gaming and Animation, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Internet of Things (IoT), Cyber Security.

- d) "IT/ITeS/Industry" includes development, production and services related to IT products, IT Software, IT service and ITeS.
- e) "Electronics and Telecommunications service" includes electronic communications services and are services provided by means of electronic signals for example, telecommunications or broadcasting networks and Industry 4.0, Telecom, Telemedicine and Tele health Data.
- f) "Electronics and Telecommunications Industry" includes the manufacturing of Automotive electronics, Industrial electronics , Consumer electronics, Medical electronics, computer hardware , telecom networking and communications, mobile devices, electronic devices, circuits, and communications equipment like transmitter, receiver, integrated circuits, microwaves, fiber, E-mobility products / components, EMS- Electronics Manufacturing Services, and MPO –Manufacturing Process Outsourcing among others. This also includes companies that transfer data in words, voice/audio or video across the globe.
- g) "Expansion and/or Diversification" means an existing unit in Sikkim undertaking seat capacity expansion such that total seat capacity as well as head count of employees on its payroll goes up, IT/ITeS, Electronics and Telecommunications products diversification.
- h) "Eligible Units" Any IT/ITeS/Electronics and Telecommunications unit with minimum **10 employees** on its payroll, setting up its operations in Sikkim during the operative period of this policy or an existing IT/ITeS/Electronics unit in Sikkim undertaking expansion and/or diversification will be eligible for availing incentives under this policy. However, an exception for eligibility would be extended to Sikkimese startup (bearing Certificate of Identification holder) where minimum two employees will also be considered as eligible units.
- i) "Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in IT Industry" shall be construed as per the definition in the MSME Act, 2006 (as amended from time to time) of the Government of India.
- j) 'Built-up Area' means the area covered by a building on all floors.
- k) 'Start-up' means an entity incorporated under startup India policy of Government of India with an exception of Sikkimese entity (bearing Certificate of Identification and registered under Udhdyog Aadhar Memorandum (UAM)) not prior to five years from the date of notification of this policy, with audited annual turnover not less than Rs.50 lakhs (consortium allowed) in any preceding financial years working towards innovation, development, commercialization of new products, processes and services having intellectual property and is driven by Information Technology, provided that any such entity formed by splitting upon reconstruction of a business already in existence shall not be considered as "start-up".
- l) 'Digital learning' is any type of learning that is accompanied by technology or by instructional practice that makes effective use of technology. It encompasses the application of a wide spectrum of practices including: blended and virtual learning. A digital learning strategy may include any of or a combination of any of adaptive learning, badging and gamification, blended learning, classroom technologies, e-textbooks, learning analytics, learning objects, mobile learning e.g. Mobile Phones, Laptops, Computers, iPads, personalized learning, online learning (or e-learning), open educational resources (OERs), technology-enhanced teaching and learning, virtual reality and augmented reality.

VI. E-GOVERNANCE AND CITIZEN INTERFACE:

A strong e-Governance infrastructure to increase efficiency of business to government and people to government interactions, as well as to enhance the transparency of governance is envisaged vide this.

- a) As a prerequisite to E-Governance, connectivity till the village level will be taken on priority. The DIT would endeavor to establish block level connectivity within one year from issue of the Policy. Further the connectivity to Panchayat shall be established within two years from the issue of policy. Video conferencing facility will be made available till the Sub-Division level.
- b) The implementation of E- Governance will be monitored by a Steering committee as listed in the Institutional framework. Further, in case of project from Government of India, monitoring and evaluation would be under taken in line with their prescribed guidelines. However, in the absence of such guidelines, the State Steering Committee will take precedence.
- c) Departmental Nodal Officers will be designated to liaise with the DIT for implementing, computerization and over all enterprise architecture for E-Governance as well as the departmental IT roadmap in their respective Departments. As far as possible, content will be localized. All the key sectors will be digitized.
- d) All independent IT solutions of the respective Departments of the Government of Sikkim shall be integrated for inter-operability.
- e) Over a period of five years from date of issue of policy, all the existing/new E-Governance project will be tendered for Public Private Partnership for sustainability.
- f) The Government shall specially encourage innovative solutions designed by start-ups/ MSMEs based in the State in E-Governance arena and other technological solutions for improvement of Governance & Services and would also frame guidelines for piloting and procurement of their services. Such Innovations in the sectors of Health, Agriculture, Tourism & Education will be provided with special preference.
- g) All Government revenue generating process shall be initiated under the E-Governance mode to ensure better operation and efficiency.
- h) Government Intends to create technology-based Platform to monitor the delivery and efficiency of all Citizen Welfare Programs for the vulnerable - run by the state.
- i) The Citizen Facilitation Centers (CFC) at Panchayat level shall come up within two years from date of issue of policy. Where there are existing Common Service Centers (CSC) the same will be strengthened as CFC and village level entrepreneurs will be encouraged to serve these.
- j) Proposals for procurements of computers and peripherals by Government Departments will be vetted by the DIT with an aim to get value for the money and to standardize the equipment.
- k) All government tender, employment news, public domain information and notices issued by government for general public shall compulsorily be published on the Government website. The State portal website shall be updated dynamically.
- l) Data security- with E Governance a large amount of data would flow and be stored in the system; as such data security will be paramount. The DIT would follow the Information technology Act, 2000 and the various rules and guidelines prescribed by the National and the State Government including those related to Cyber-crime and Digital media.
- m) A certain minimum percentage of total State Budget allocated for respective departments shall be provisioned for E-Governance initiatives for procurement of hardware, development of software applications, maintenance & training. Such percentage shall be defined annually in the budget.
- n) Under the System Enterprise Architecture every department and State Government Agencies would adopt an Annual IT plan in consultation with DIT for preparation of budget plan for ICT component. Thus, all IT related proposal (Software and Hardware) should be routed through the IT Section of the respective Department and implemented by DIT or the IT section of the respective department unless the substantive department provides a strong justification to do it otherwise.

- o) All E-Governance projects shall adhere to the guidelines of “Open Standards” issued by Central Government. The State Government also encourages the use of Open-Source Software to the extent possible in order to cut down unnecessary costs. Wherever proprietary software needs to be used, it should be properly justified.
- p) Process Re-engineering: State Government will redesign the existing government processes wherever required for improvement in electronic services delivery and continuously work towards improvement of the quality of delivery through various delivery channels.
- q) A comprehensive system of impact assessment of all E-Governance initiatives and other investments made by the State Government departments in ICT projects etc. shall be done through independent agencies from time to time to evaluate the socio-economic benefits and outcome of such investment. This report shall be submitted to the Apex committee as listed in the Institutional framework.
- r) Building an effective ICT infrastructure.
 1. Various schemes of National E-governance Plan (NeGP) will be implemented with respect to State Wide area network (SWAN), State Data center (SDC) etc. will be implemented in the state and monitored by the State Government.
 2. SDC: It will provide consolidation of government services to render effective delivery of G2C, G2B, G2G and G2E service. It will provide for storage all the all departmental data, application servers, web servers and mail servers. The State will revamp the existing SDC under DIT to provide these services.

VII. IT BASED HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT:

Human Resource Development for IT is necessary both for providing the professional manpower to the IT industry and to improve the employability of the citizens in IT.

a) Community Facilitation Centers based trainings:

For making the e-citizen interface successful, citizens will be trained in information retrieval and transmission, through the Community Facilitation Centers (CFC).

b) Training center for unemployed:

The Government will encourage private sector initiatives in setting up Training Centers for the Unemployed Educated youths in coordination with the Department of Skills and entrepreneurship. Private Training Centers opened by Private Investors shall be encouraged with alliance or collaboration with the State University facilitated by the Government of Sikkim providing Credibility by various Certifications. Some of the areas of training to be emphasized immediately are Software Programming & Development, Data Science & Big Data Analytics, Electronic Design and Manufacturing Processes. The faculties for these can come from a mix of the academicians of the State University and the Corporate Advisors appointed by the State Government, so that expectation match the industry level desirables.

The Government shall create a *State-managed Digital Online Course Repository* and a Digital Marketplace – for skilling / up-skilling. Allowing home grown certified courses to be offered to the external world and bringing the best of external courses at subsidized rates for the local population of Sikkim.

c) Cyber Cafes and Information Kiosks:

The Government will encourage entrepreneurs to set up Information Kiosks all over the State. The kiosks shall provide access to a wide range of citizen-oriented information, and e-governance related information. They need not have internet connection and could simply have data stored for access by the citizens. These kiosks will be encouraged to use touch-screens requiring no use of the keyboard or mouse. The Government will assist the entrepreneurs in getting space in Government/public locations. In addition, STD/ISD booth owners will be encouraged to convert them to Cyber Cafes/Cyber Communication Centers.

Cyber Communication Kiosk shall have chargeable internet facility throughout Sikkim and shall be used as the Telemedicine and Tele-banking Kiosk in association with the Telemedicine Operator.

d) Digital Learning in Schools & Colleges:

The Government will encourage all educational institutes in the State to introduce Digital learning as one of the primary medium of education in the institutes. With regards to the above a strategic plan will be designed with an aim to “provide access of technology for students & provide access of training to teachers and instructional administrators”. The State educational polices/plans shall go forward, make technology an essential component of the overall development of the educational institutes of the State.

The schools & colleges would be encouraged to incorporate curriculums related to the same where basic level and medium level computer literacy courses should be mandatorily introduced.

e) Capacity Building in Government:

Capacity building will be a mix of outsourced (including NIELIT) and in-house training in skills such as project management, business process re-engineering, Change management etc. Leadership meet/ seminars for top level politicians and bureaucrats is being planned to bring awareness on ICT so as to ensure the vision is clear to all stakeholders.

Refresher course should be held from time to time. The DIT or its representative in the various department shall arrange a training calendar for SSITS and SSSITS on various IT fields like, Technologies, Server management, networks, Project management etc. to update as per requirements of the Government.

VIII. IT INDUSTRY:

The Government intends to use IT as catalyst to provide new opportunities to all segments of society especially for the creation of employment in the state. All incentives to industrial units extended under the state policy of Sikkim shall be applicable to the IT, IT Enabled Services, electronics and telecommunication sectors. The state Government will facilitate investment by creating investor friendly environment, single window clearance and reliable infrastructure. The State Government shall also encourage establishment of IT investment regions in the form of Special Economic Zone in line with SEZ Act 2005 and Rules 2006 and its respective amendments; Electronic Manufacturing Cluster under EMC 2.0 of MeItY and NEIDS 2017. The IT/ITeS and Electronic Telecommunication Industries are encouraged to follow to the extent possible the e-waste(management), Rules 2016 in conduct of their business.

IX. BRANDING AND PROMOTION:

A brand language establishing Sikkim as the preferred IT destination will be developed. For promotion in line with the branding strategy, domestic and International roadshows will be organized before invited audiences comprising of leading IT/ITeS, Electronics, financial services and investment banking, asset management companies, property development firms and International Governments, heads of missions in India, academic community, thought leaders, international and national media heads, opinion makers and influencers. Reverse Buyers-Sellers meets and Annual Global Investors meets will be organized. The Government will institute annual awards to Sikkimese entrepreneurs in the field of IT making innovative products or services. An annual award will also be given to the IT industries (Sikkimese or non-Sikkimese) making exports of above Rupees 25 crores annually. The State shall be participating in the International and Domestic trade shows/trade fairs/events/conferences and seminars to highlights the advantages the State offer for the IT/ITeS, Electronics and related sectors.

X. INDUSTRY INCENTIVES:

The State Government will play a pivotal role in promoting vibrant IT/ITeS/Electronics industry in Sikkim. The State Government will fulfil the pre requisites as mandated by SEZ, EMC, NEIDS and any other scheme of Government of India/Funding Agencies.

- i) twenty-four hours uninterrupted power supply at stable frequency in the Zone;
 - ii) reliable connectivity for uninterrupted and secure data transmission;
 - iii) provision for central air-conditioning system; and
 - iv) a ready to use, furnished plug and pay facility for end users.
- a) Make land available from the Government land bank.
 - b) A single window mechanism of giving approvals and clearances.
 - c) Incentives for IT/ITeS/Electronics & Telecommunication Industries.
 1. Since Sikkim is a part of the North East Region, all subsidies under NEIDS of GOI shall be applicable standalone or in conjunction with SEZ, EMC and other State/Funding Schemes as may be applicable.
 2. Goods and Service tax reimbursement (State)- The reimbursement that will be up to 50% of SGST for the period of 5 years from the date of commencement of commercial operation/production by the unit.
 3. Transport Incentive (State)- SNT supervision concession for the period of 5 years from the date of commencement of commercial production by the unit.

XI. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND POLICY PERIOD:

DIT, Government of Sikkim will be the key implementing agency in consultation with the Commerce and Industries Department, Government of Sikkim. The Central incentives will be provided through State Commerce & Industries Department under NEIDS, SEZs and relevant Acts/Schemes while the State incentives and EMC incentives will be provided through DIT as approved by this policy. The IT/ITeS/Electronics/Telecommunication sector will be considered as essential service.

Tasks	Completion Schedule Projection
Set up Institutional Framework (Apex Committee, Steering Committee & Advisory Committee)	3Q of 2020
1st IT Park	4Q of 2020
E-Governance	2Q of 2021
To generate up to 20000 employment	4Q of 2024
To attract investment up to Rs. 500 crores	4Q of 2024
To raise IT exports up to Rs. 50 crores	4Q of 2024

The policy shall come into force with effect from the date of publication in the Sikkim Gazette and shall remain in force for a period for 5 years or till declaration of a new or revised policy, whichever is earlier. Only those units which commence operation during this policy period shall be eligible for claiming incentives. The tenure of incentive of 5 years would be honored by the State from the date of commercial production by the investing company irrespective of closure of the policy period.

XII. RIGHTS OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- a) The State Government reserves the right to amend any provision(s) including amendment or withdrawal of any of the incentives/concessions as and when necessary for development of ICT Industries and in the interest of the general people of the State from time to time under the provision of this Policy.
- b) The State Government reserves the right to make/amend the necessary rules for implementation of this policy as and when required.
- c) The State Government may also reward any exemplary performance or innovative products.
- d) The decision of the IT Department, Government of Sikkim, as regards interpretation of this policy shall be final.

The IT Department reserves the right to enact and notify any other policy or policies as deemed fit for the development of IT/ITeS sector of the State.

This notification supersedes the earlier I.T. Policy for Sikkim issued vide notification no. GO/3/DI/99 dated 31/3/1999 and 207 dated 18/07/2006.