

Google.org Launches Gram Panchayat Puraskar in AP and Karnataka

Announces Rs. 5 lakh for winning panchayats

New Delhi, (December 11, 2008) -- Google.org – the philanthropic arm of Google (NASDAQ: GOOG) – today announced the launch of the Gram Panchayat Puraskar to reward the best innovations in local governance by Gram Panchayats in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. This initiative is the first of its kind by Google in India and gives the opportunity to Panchayats to showcase the innovative work in their villages, and emerge as the star innovators of their respective states.

Entries for the competition will be evaluated on the basis of criterion such as empowerment, innovation and scale. The innovation needs to be in the context of one of the following six areas - education, health and nutrition, water supply, rural infrastructure, rural electrification, resource mobilization - going above and beyond the call of duty.

The Gram Panchayat will have to demonstrate the following:

- Inclusion of all social and income groups in village decision-making or planning.
- Sharing information with villagers such as Gram Sabha dates, proceedings and action items; record maintenance; Gram Panchayat plan
- Community tracking and monitoring of the budgets and quality of the programs
- Working with other programs to reach development objectives

Encompassing 27,942 villages in 49 districts, the competition has been launched under the 'Inform and Empower' initiative of Google.org. A panel of public sector experts in India will select a total of 20 finalists from each state. A separate panel will select the 5 winners in each of the states. Each prize will be INR 500,000.

According to Salimah Samji, Program Manager, Google.org, "Panchayats create positive change at the grassroot level, but their success stories aren't as well known as they should be. For example in Kerala, a Panchayat that was committed to education made sure the entire village was completely literate. In the Thar district of Rajasthan, a Panchayat converted the area into a tourist destination, increasing the income of its inhabitants. We want to celebrate innovative Panchayats and create incentives to further innovation in local governance throughout the country."

"India is one of the largest, most populous democracies in the world and the government allocates large amounts of funds to the Panchayats for local level development. Clean water, health and education are the key elements of human welfare and play an instrumental role in economic development. Google.org is committed to enhancing development in India and taking innovation beyond Google" remarks Shailesh Rao, Managing Director, Google India.

To enter the contest, users can visit the contest website at www.google.org/ggpp.html or pick-up an application form at their district Panchayat office in Karnataka or Andhra Pradesh. All legally recognized Gram Panchayats in the states of Karnataka or Andhra Pradesh are eligible to apply.

The contest will be open for applications from December 12, 2008 through January 25, 2009, with one entry form per Gram Panchayat being accepted. Entries - accepted in Telugu, Kannada, Hindi or English - must be postmarked on or before January 25, 2009 to be considered. A total of 10 prizes will be given out - 5 for each State

Details will be available at District and Block Panchayat offices and in Panchayat magazines and newsletters.

About Google Inc.

Google's innovative search technologies connect millions of people around the world with information every day. Founded in 1998 by Stanford Ph.D. students Larry Page and Sergey Brin, Google today is a top web property in all major global markets. Google's targeted advertising program provides businesses of all sizes with measurable results, while enhancing the overall web experience for users. Google is headquartered in Silicon Valley with offices throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia. For more information, please visit <http://www.google.com>.

About Google.org

Google.org, the philanthropic arm of Google, uses the power of information to help people better their lives. We develop and invest in tools and partnerships that can help bring shared knowledge to bear on the world's most pressing challenges in the areas of climate change, economic development and global health. For more information, visit <http://www.google.org>.

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