

## **Haryana's CM Window Portal: Transforming Public Grievance Redressal Through Digital Governance**

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### **Abstract**

The Chief Minister's (CM) Window Portal, launched by the Government of Haryana, India, on December 25, 2014, represents a pioneering effort to digitise public grievance redressal. Aligned with India's Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS), the portal seeks to reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies, enhance transparency, and foster citizen-centric governance. This case study examines the portal's operational framework, outcomes, challenges, and potential as a pedagogical tool in public administration education. Drawing on empirical data, stakeholder interviews and theoretical frameworks, this study highlights the portal's transformative impact, offering a beacon of hope for digital governance innovations in developing contexts. This study offers insights for scholars, policymakers, and educators, inspiring them to explore and implement similar solutions.

### **Introduction**

Public administration is fundamentally about delivering equitable, efficient, and responsive services to citizens. However, dissatisfaction from perceived injustices often emerges due to administrative inefficiencies, corruption, or unfulfilled entitlements (Government of India, 2009). Globally, grievance redressal mechanisms have evolved from paper-based systems to digital platforms, reflecting the broader shift towards e-governance. In India, the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS), initiated in 2007, facilitates the routing of citizen complaints to relevant authorities. Building on this framework, the Government of Haryana launched the CM Window Portal in 2014 to streamline grievance redressal, reduce physical interactions with government offices, and bridge the gap between citizens and governance. This article comprehensively analyzes the CM Window Portal,

exploring its operational mechanics, societal impact, and challenges. It situates the portal within public administration theories, such as New Public Management (NPM) and Digital Era Governance (DEG), focusing on efficiency, accountability, and citizen-centricity. This study evaluates the portal's effectiveness through empirical data and stakeholder perspectives and proposes reforms to enhance its inclusivity and transparency. Additionally, it underscores the portal's value as a teaching tool for public administration curricula, offering practical insights into digital governance and equipping scholars, policymakers, and educators with valuable knowledge for their work.

## Theoretical Framework

The CM Window Portal can be analysed through two key public administration paradigms:

**New Public Management (NPM)** promotes market-oriented reforms, emphasising efficiency, performance metrics, and a citizen-as-customer model (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). The portal's performance metrics, quarterly reviews, and lean staffing align with NPM's focus on results-driven governance.

**Digital Era Governance (DEG):** DEG highlights the transformative role of technology in reconfiguring administrative processes and enhancing citizen engagement (Dunleavy et al., 2006). The portal's digital infrastructure, real-time tracking and feedback mechanisms embody the DEG's principles of accessibility and transparency.

These frameworks provide a lens through which to evaluate a portal's design, implementation, and impact, particularly its ability to address bureaucratic inefficiencies and empower citizens.

## The CM Window Portal: Operational Framework

The CM Window Portal is a user-centric platform that allows citizens to lodge complaints through multiple channels: counters at district and sub-divisional offices, the SARAL portal, or during the Chief Minister's field visits. Complaints are digitised, and Complainants receive a unique tracking ID via an SMS message for real-time monitoring. The system excludes grievances related to the Right to Information Act (2005), subjudice matters or government employee service issues to prioritise public service delivery.

A lean team of 35 personnel, including retired officers, manages the portal, with support from 20 call centre operators. Complaints are screened, and serious allegations (e.g., fraud, corruption) are flagged for expedited action. Nodal officers appointed at the departmental level, are tasked with resolving complaints within 30 days. This process involves reviewing records, consulting relevant officers, and preparing an Action Taken Report (ATR), which requires signatures from the complainant, a designated eminent person, and the Nodal Officer to ensure accountability.

The portal's governance structure includes regular review meetings chaired by the Chief Minister, who plays a pivotal role in overseeing the portal's operations and ensuring accountability. These meetings are attended by senior officials and are supplemented by video conferences with field offices. Quarterly performance metrics assess district-level disposal rates, enabling targeted interventions for underperforming regions. In cases of severe negligence, disciplinary actions—such as suspensions, FIRs, or vigilance inquiries—are initiated to reinforce accountability.

### **Outcomes and Societal Impact**

The portal serves diverse societal groups, including the elderly, widows, farmers, labourers, and marginalised communities. It addresses grievances across departments like Police, Panchayats, Rural Development, urban local bodies, Health, Power, and Excise and Taxation. Common complaints include corruption by village Sarpanches, land encroachment, agricultural subsidy misuse, unauthorised construction (notably in Gurugram), police misconduct, and delays in issuing essential certificates. High-profile cases resolved include the following:

A blind Muslim woman who waited 25 years for her husband's death certificate due to bribe demands was resolved through direct intervention by the CM's office. Another significant case involved embezzlement of ₹10 crore in agricultural subsidies, which was promptly addressed, leading to significant fines and recoveries. Environmental violations also received attention, resulting in fines and penalties for defaulting on the firm. These cases demonstrate the portal's effectiveness in addressing serious grievances and ensuring accountability.

The portal has transformed public service delivery by replacing cumbersome paper-based

systems with contactless, cashless, and transparent interfaces. Citizens value real-time tracking, SMS notifications and post-resolution feedback calls, which save time and resources. Public managers' report improved inter-departmental coordination and direct access to the state headquarters, reducing traditional bureaucratic barriers. Unstructured interviews with 50 complainants, two Nodal Officers from Sirsa and five state-level public managers revealed high satisfaction with the portal's accessibility and accountability, providing reassurance about its effectiveness despite some operational challenges.

### **Challenges and Limitations**

While transformative, the proposed CM Window Portal faces multifaceted challenges that undermine its efficacy and inclusiveness. These challenges can be categorised into socio-economic, technological, administrative, and political dimensions, each reflecting broader tensions in digital governance.

#### **Socioeconomic Barriers and the Digital Divide:**

The digital divide remains a significant obstacle, particularly for rural, elderly, and less tech-savvy citizens. Haryana's diverse socio-economic landscape includes urban centres like Gurugram and remote rural areas with limited internet access. Interviews with complainants revealed that many lack smartphones or reliable internet, forcing them to rely on physical CM Window counters, which are often understaffed. For example, a farmer in a remote village reported travelling 30 kilometers to a district office to complain about subsidy misuse, highlighting accessibility gaps. The exclusion of government employees from filing Complaints further limits the portal's scope because they may face service-related grievances that impact public service delivery.

#### **Transparency and Procedural Deficiencies:**

A critical issue is the inconsistent preparation of Action Taken Reports (ATRs). Nodal Officers sometimes upload ATRs without consulting complainants, violating the portal's Participatory ethos. For instance, a complainant in Sirsa reported that an ATR had been uploaded, claiming the resolution of a land encroachment issue despite no action being taken on the ground. Such practices erode trust and contradict DEG's emphasis on transparency.

Complaints are often dismissed as frivolous, sub-judice, or irrelevant based on subjective field reports without clear justification. This raises concerns about fairness, particularly when dismissals align with departmental interests.

### **Administrative Resistance and Capacity Gaps:**

Administrative attitudes pose a significant barrier. Some Nodal Officers lack training in digital tools or exhibit bureaucratic inertia, delaying resolutions beyond their 30-day mandate. Interviews with public managers highlight resistance to the portal's oversight mechanisms because field officers perceive them as micromanagement. For example, a Panchayat official delayed addressing a complaint about village fund embezzlement, citing "procedural complexities," only for the CM's office to intervene directly. While efficient, the lean staffing model strains resources during peak complaint volumes, leading to backlogs.

### **Misuse of the System:**

The portal is occasionally misused for personal vendettas or frivolous complaints, diverting resources from legitimate grievances. Data from the original document notes cases driven by jealousy, revenge, or enmity, such as false allegations against the village Sarpanches.

Personal scores. Such misuse transforms the portal into a "counter-complaints platform," undermining its purpose. In extreme cases, unscrupulous complainants exploit legal loopholes, such as filing court cases against CM Window staff to harass them, further taxing the system.

### **Political Interference and Media Scrutiny:**

Media reports suggest that political considerations influence decision-making in sensitive cases, particularly those involving high-profile corruption or land disputes in urban areas like Gurugram. For instance, a complaint about an unauthorized construction was lodged.

Vague allegations of political influence, often tied to undisclosed connections, undermine public trust in governance. This reflects NPM's critique of political capture in public administration, where external pressures erode impartial decision-making. Public managers acknowledge that such perceptions, even if unsubstantiated, damage the portal's credibility.

### **Systemic Inequities in Grievance Scope:**

While necessary to avoid legal conflicts, the portal's exclusion of Right to Information (RTI) and sub-judice matters limits its ability to address systemic issues. For example, a complainant seeking transparency on government land allocation was redirected to the RTI process, thus delaying the resolution. This fragmentation of grievance mechanisms creates confusion and undermines the portal's promise of comprehensive redressal.

These challenges reflect the complexities of digital governance in a developing context in which technological innovation must contend with entrenched bureaucratic cultures, socio-economic disparities, and political dynamics. From a theoretical perspective, they highlight DEG's caution against over-reliance on technology without addressing human and systemic factors and NPM's warning about the risks of efficiency-driven reforms neglecting equity.

### **Proposed Reforms**

To address these challenges, a robust multi-dimensional reform strategy is proposed, integrating technological innovation, administrative restructuring, stakeholder engagement, and global best practices. These reforms aim to enhance the portal's inclusivity, transparency, and efficiency, aligning with the DEG's citizen-centric principles and NPM's focus on performance and accountability.

**AI-Powered Analytics:** Deploy artificial intelligence to categorise complaints by urgency, complexity, and department, thereby reducing manual errors and prioritising serious allegations (e.g., corruption cases). AI can also identify patterns, such as recurring complaints against specific departments, thereby enabling proactive interventions. For instance, machine learning models can flag repeated land encroachment issues in Gurugram for systemic audits.

**Multilingual Interfaces:** Develop chatbots and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems supporting regional languages like Hindi and Punjabi, ensuring accessibility for non-English speakers. These tools can guide users through complaint lodging and status tracking, thereby reducing reliance on physical counters.

**Offline Capabilities:** A mobile app with offline complaint submission features can be launched. This allows rural users to draft and upload complaints when connectivity is available. This will address the digital divide, particularly among farmers and labourers in remote areas.

Integration with Existing Platforms: Link the portal with India's Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG) to streamline access and leverage existing digital infrastructure. This approach could reduce duplication and enhance user familiarity.

#### **Administrative Restructuring and Capacity Building:**

**Dedicated Nodal Officers:** Appoint full-time nodal officers in each department, board, or corporation with independent authority to resolve complaints. This will reduce delays caused by overburdened officers juggling multiple roles. For example, a dedicated officer in the Police Department could expedite misconduct cases and ensure timely FIR registrations.

**Comprehensive Training Programs:** Partner with Mission Karmayogi and state training institutes to develop a curriculum for nodal officers that covers digital tools, ethical decision-making, and complainant engagement. Training should include case studies, such as the 25-year death certificate delay, to foster empathy and problem-solving skills.

**Centralised Oversight Body:** This body establishes a Grievance Redressal Authority to monitor ATR quality, review dismissals and ensure compliance with the 30-day resolution mandate. The ATR audit body could conduct random audits to verify complainant involvement.

#### **Enhancing Transparency and Accountability:**

**Mandatory ATR Justifications:** Nodal officers are required to provide detailed rationales for complaint closures, particularly rejections, uploaded publicly (with anonymised complainant details). For instance, evidence of investigation, such as field reports or correspondence from the complainant should be included in the dismissal of a complaint as frivolous.

**Multi-Channel Feedback:** Integrate platforms such as WhatsApp, email, and SMS, for complainants to submit feedback or appeal resolutions. A dedicated appeals portal could streamline escalations, ensuring dissatisfied users have recourse beyond call centre interactions.

**Public Dashboards:** This step publishes real-time statistics on complaint volumes, resolution rates, and departmental performance to foster public trust. For example, a dashboard showing total complaints resolved within 30 days could highlight efficiency while identifying

underperforming districts.

### **Addressing Misuse and Frivolous Complaints:**

**Pre-Screening Mechanisms:** AI-driven filters are implemented to flag potentially frivolous complaints based on keywords, repetition, or lack of supporting evidence. Flagged complaints can undergo manual review to balance efficiency and fairness.

**Legal Deterrent Measures:** To deter misuse, introduce nominal penalties for repeated false complaints, such as temporary suspension of portal access. Public awareness campaigns can educate users about the portal's purpose, emphasising legitimate grievances.

**Mediation Processes:** Introduce a mediation step for complaints involving personal disputes, where a neutral facilitator (e.g., a community leader) resolves issues before escalation. This approach could reduce vindictive complaints, such as those caused by village-level rivalries.

### **Bridging Socioeconomic and Systemic Gaps:**

**Rural Outreach Programs:** Expand physical CM window counters were expanded in rural areas, and mobile grievance vans were deployed to collect complaints in underserved regions. These vans could operate on fixed schedules, like mobile health clinics, ensuring regular access.

**Inclusive Grievance Scope:** Re-evaluate exclusions like RTI and sub-judice matters, allowing limited redressal for procedural delays (e.g., RTI responses). A hybrid model could integrate RTI grievances with CPGRAMS, thereby reducing fragmentation.

**Employee grievances:** Government employees are permitted to file non-service-related complaints (e.g., workplace harassment), broadening the portal's equity. A separate module could handle such cases to avoid conflicts with service regulations.

### **Countering Political Interference:**

**Independent oversight:** An independent ombudsman should be established to review politically sensitive cases and ensure impartiality. This would align with global best practices, such as Australia's Commonwealth Ombudsman, which investigates administrative actions.

**Media Engagement:** Proactively address media scrutiny by publishing case studies of resolved high-profile complaints (e.g., subsidy embezzlement cases) and counter negative perceptions with evidence of impact.

**Stakeholder Consultations:** Convene regular forums with civil society, media, and political representatives to discuss portal operations, fostering transparency and reducing politicization.

### **Global Best Practices and Scalability:**

**Learning from International Models:** Adopt elements from successful digital grievance systems, such as Singapore's One Service app, which integrates community feedback and Real-time tracking. Singapore's model emphasises user-friendly interfaces and proactive issue resolution, which could inform Haryana's chatbot development.

**National Scalability:** The CM Window model was piloted in other Indian states, adapting it to local languages and administrative structures. A national framework integrated with CPGRAMS could standardize digital grievance redressal and address regional disparities.

**Suo Motu Actions:** Proactively address complaints reported in the media and social media As this is practiced in South Korea's e-People system. For example, a newspaper report on sanitation issues could trigger an investigation, demonstrating responsiveness.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

**Grievance Redressal Assessment Index (GRAI):** Develop a composite index measuring effectiveness (resolution rates), timeliness (30-day compliance), complainant satisfaction (feedback scores), and organizational commitment (training and resource allocation). The GRAI could rank districts, indicating incentivizing performance, as seen in the portal's quarterly metrics.

**Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct annual impact assessments by combining quantitative data with qualitative insights from stakeholder interviews. These studies can identify emerging challenges, such as the evolving patterns of the digital divide.

**SWOT Analysis:** Perform regular SWOT analyses to refine processes. For instance, a 2025 analysis might reveal strengths (high-resolution rates), weaknesses (rural access gaps),

opportunities (AI integration), and threats (political interference).

### **Public Engagement and Trust Building:**

**Social Media Campaigns:** Leverage platforms like X to share success stories, such as resolving a blind woman's 25-year certificate delay and providing tutorials on portal usage. To expand reach, campaigns can target youth and urban users.

**Community Ambassadors:** Local leaders, such as women's self-help groups and youth volunteers, should be trained to assist rural complainants, building trust and capacity. This mirrors India's ASHA healthcare worker model.

**Feedback Loops:** Use complainant feedback to inform reforms, such as simplifying ATR formats based on user complaints about complexity. Regular surveys can gauge satisfaction, ensuring continuous improvement.

### **Implementation Considerations**

**Timeline:** Roll out technological upgrades (AI, chatbots) within 12–18 months, starting with pilot projects in urban districts like Gurugram. Rural outreach and training programs can begin within 6 months, leveraging existing infrastructure.

Anticipate resistance from field officers, addressed through incentives (e.g., performance bonuses) and change management workshops. Political interference can be mitigated by strengthening the independent oversight body's mandate.

**Monitoring:** A dedicated reform task force, reporting quarterly to the Chief Minister, is established to track progress and adjust strategies based on GRAI scores and stakeholder feedback.

These reforms comprehensively address portal challenges, balancing technological innovation with human-centric solutions. They draw on the DEG's emphasis on iterative, user-focused design and NPM's focus on measurable outcomes, positioning the CM Window Portal as a scalable model for digital governance.

### **Educational Implications**

The CM Window Portal offers a rich case study for public administration curricula,

particularly in courses like Teaching Public Service in the Digital Age. Its integration into teaching can bridge theoretical concepts—such as NPM, DEG, and citizen-centric governance—with practical applications. Key pedagogical strategies include the following:

### **Live Demonstrations:**

Arrange visits to Nodal officer offices, where students can observe real-time complaint handling. For example, a demonstration at a Sub-Divisional Magistrate's office can reveal the complexities of digital grievance management, from complaint logging to ATR preparation.

**Case-Based Learning:** Assign students to analyse specific cases, such as the 25-year delay in issuing a death certificate, to identify systemic failures and propose solutions. This will foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

**Stakeholder Interviews:** Encourage students to conduct mock interviews with public managers, Nodal Officers, and complainants to simulate the unstructured interviews described in the study. This approach builds empathy and qualitative research skills.

**Policy Analysis:** Task students to develop a GRAI or draft reform proposals.

Applying SWOT analysis to evaluate the portal's strengths and weaknesses. This enhances analytical and policy formulation skills.

**Comparative Studies:** The CM window portal is compared with traditional mechanisms, such as State Human Rights Commissions or District Grievance Committees, to highlight the evolution of grievance redressal. This contextualises the digital transformation within historical administrative practices.

### **The case study achieves several learning objectives:**

Understanding the operational mechanics of digital grievance platforms and their role in governance. Identify corruption-prone functions (e.g., subsidy allocation, land management) and propose preventive measures.

Analysing the interplay of technology, public policy, and citizen engagement in addressing bureaucratic inefficiencies.

Developing empathy for marginalised complainants and advocating for inclusive reforms.

By engaging with real-world data, such as the portal's resolution of complaints, students gain practical insights into governance challenges, preparing them for careers in public service.

## Conclusion

The CM Window Portal exemplifies the transformative potential of digital platforms in public grievance redressal. Its user-centric design, real-time tracking, and efficient management by a lean team have resolved thousands of complaints,

Diverse societal groups addressed systemic issues such as corruption and bureaucratic delays. However, challenges such as the digital divide, transparency gaps, and system misuse Reforms are necessary. The proposed strategies—technological upgrades, structural enhancements, and capacity building—offer a roadmap for strengthening the portal's inclusivity and accountability.

This portal provides public administration scholars with a model for studying digital governance in developing contexts, aligning with NPM and DEG frameworks. It serves as a dynamic teaching tool for educators and promotes critical thinking, empathy, and policy innovation among students. By addressing its limitations and scaling its successes, the CM Window Portal can inspire broader reforms in public administration, ensuring responsive, transparent, and citizen-centric governance.

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