



UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATION FUND

PILOT PROJECT SCHEME FOR ACCESS TO ICTs & ICT ENABLED SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

STAKEHOLDERS CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 7, 2011

Department of Telecommunications,
Ministry of Communications & IT,
Government of India



Accessible ICTs for Persons with Disabilities (“PwD”)

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OUTLINE

- ▶ Importance of Accessible ICTs
- ▶ Role of USOF
- ▶ The Scheme

Why?

SIGNIFICANCE

- ▶ One of the largest disabled populations in the world
- ▶ 21.9 Million as per Census 2001
- ▶ Census 2011 likely to reveal a larger number owing to better data collection methodologies
- ▶ The World Bank pegs actual number between 40 and 80 million
- ▶ 49% Literate, 34% employed, 42.46% women
- ▶ **75% in Rural India**

What?

Needs Assessment-Inclusion

- ▶ **Barriers to Communication:**

Owing to lack of availability, affordability and /or inadequate awareness, a large section of PwDs is deprived of accessible communications.

- ▶ **Barriers to Self-Reliance:**

Disabled people often face difficulties in leading life of independence and dignity

- ▶ **Barriers to Empowerment:**

Disabled people are often not equipped with necessary wherewithal to realize their true potential, to contribute to and participate in mainstream society

- ▶ **Barriers to Inclusion:**

Eventually this translates into isolation & marginalization

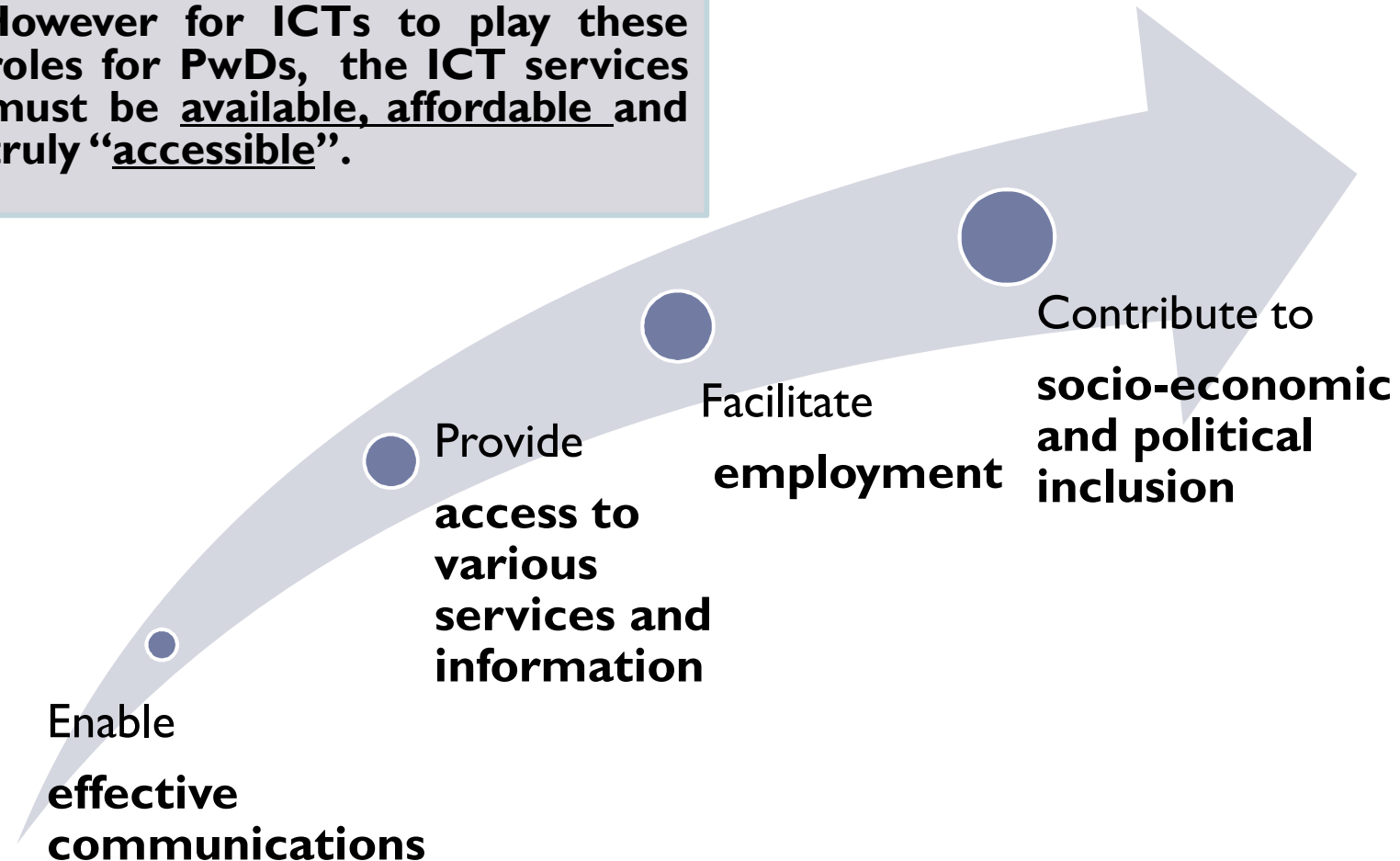
BACKGROUND

How can ICTs address these issues?

How?

POTENTIAL: ICTs can...

However for ICTs to play these roles for PwDs, the ICT services must be available, affordable and truly “accessible”.



How?

Role of ICTs with ATs

- ▶ ICTs in conjunction with Assistive Technologies have the potential to bring a positive change in the lives of persons with various disabilities
 - ▶ Hearing
 - ▶ Visual
 - ▶ Speech
 - ▶ Mobility
 - ▶ Learning
 - ▶ Aged & illiterate

How?

Applications to Enhance Accessibility

Text to Speech ATs & Speech to Text ATs

- Benefit PwDs and illiterate/ semiliterate
- Enables PwDs to communicate, and to access news, information and e-services and to perform ICT enabled jobs

Ergonomic Design

- Benefit PwDs and aged to communicate

Screen Magnifiers

- For visually impaired
- Improve the utility of Mobile Phones/Computers/ATM/Other Equipments having display features

How?

UNCRPD

- ▶ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- ▶ Became an international law on May 5, 2008
- ▶ Ratified by India on October 1, 2008.
- ▶ *‘To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, **to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems...**’ (Article 9)*

**Pilot Project Scheme for Access to ICTs
and ICT enabled Services for PwDs in
Rural India**

Role of Universal Service Obligation Fund



In India, Universal Service Obligation is the obligation to provide access to telegraph(**telecommunications**) **services** to the **people** in rural and remote areas at **reasonable** and **affordable** prices

USOF's Initiative

Beginning of a Journey....

- ▶ In keeping with its mandate of Universal Service and in recognition of the vital role that ICTs can play in facilitating the daily lives of PwDs, enhancing their well being and productivity, and enabling their active participation in society, USOF has decided to launch a scheme of Pilot Projects for enabling access to ICT facilities with ATs for PwDs in rural India.

USOF's Initiative

Objectives

- ▶ Meaningful access to telecommunications facilities
- ▶ Access to information, services, employment opportunities
- ▶ Demonstration of the significance and positive impact of ICT access through ATs on the lives of PwDs
- ▶ Encouragement to Service Providers and other stakeholders to take up such initiatives on a larger scale to address the needs of PwDs.

USOF's Initiative

Scheme Focus



Benefit : Persons with various forms of disability

Facilitate: provision of telecommunications with appropriate ATs

Encourage: development and availability of relevant bundled content

Incorporate: training of both facilitators and PwDs in use of ICTs with ATs

USOF's Initiative

Project Categories

ICT Centres

- For PwDs in educational/rehabilitation/vocational training institutions in rural areas
- Equipped with appropriate Assistive Technologies/Content

Special Handsets and Content

- For PwDs in rural areas
- With/without access to bundled content

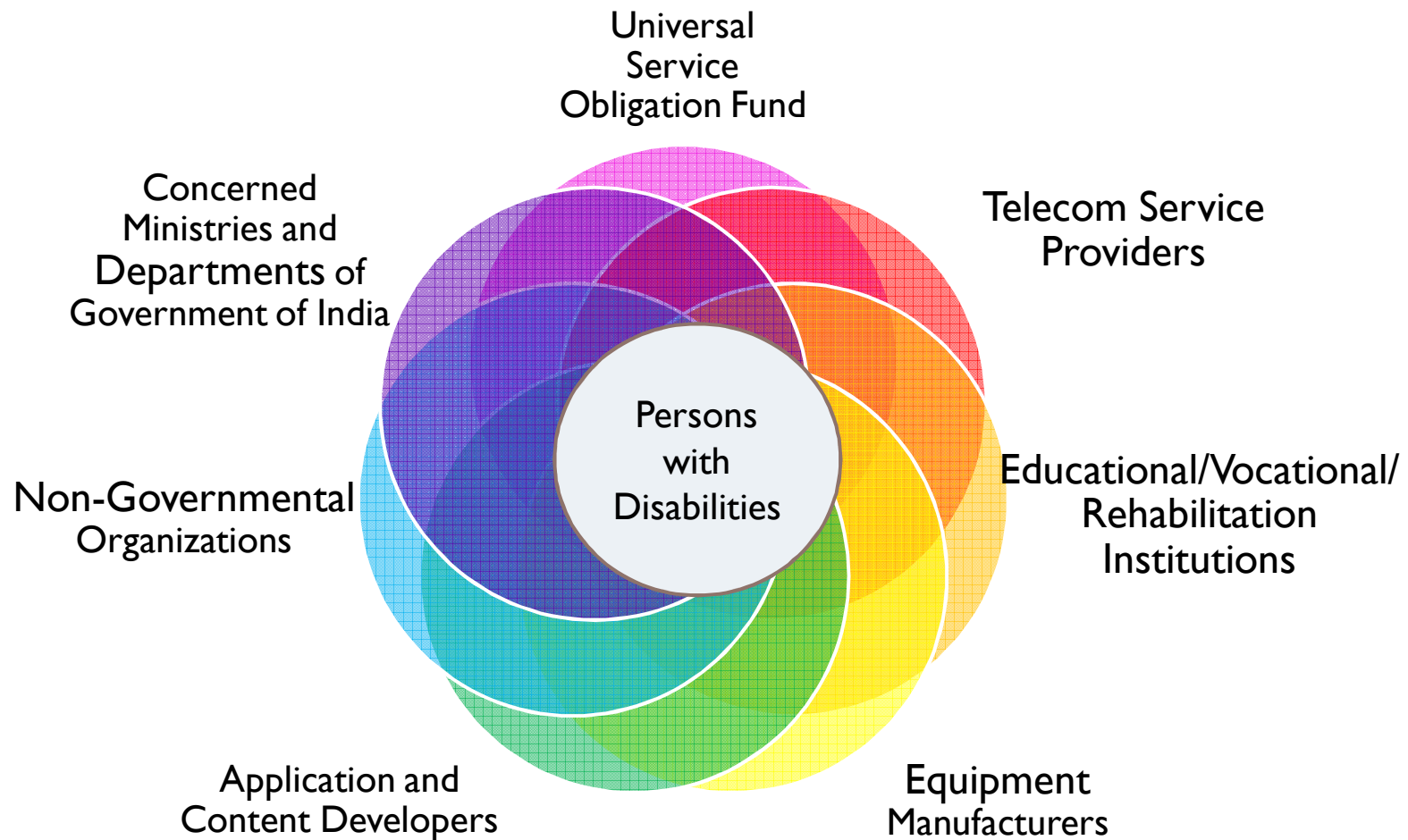
Public Access

- To telecommunications facilities equipping with ATs in villages/in and around rural institutions for PwDs

▶ Other project types may also be considered.

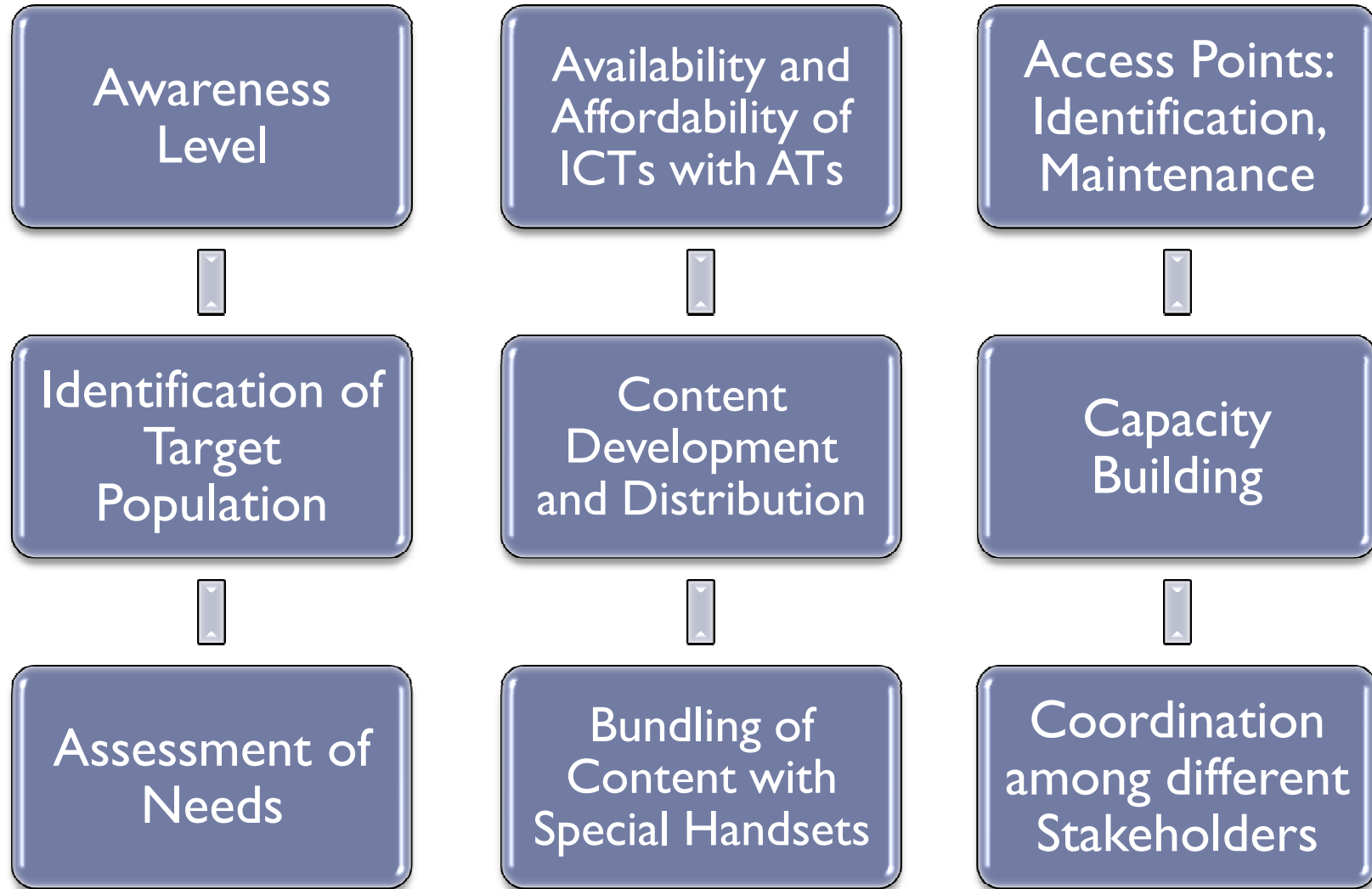
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Stakeholders



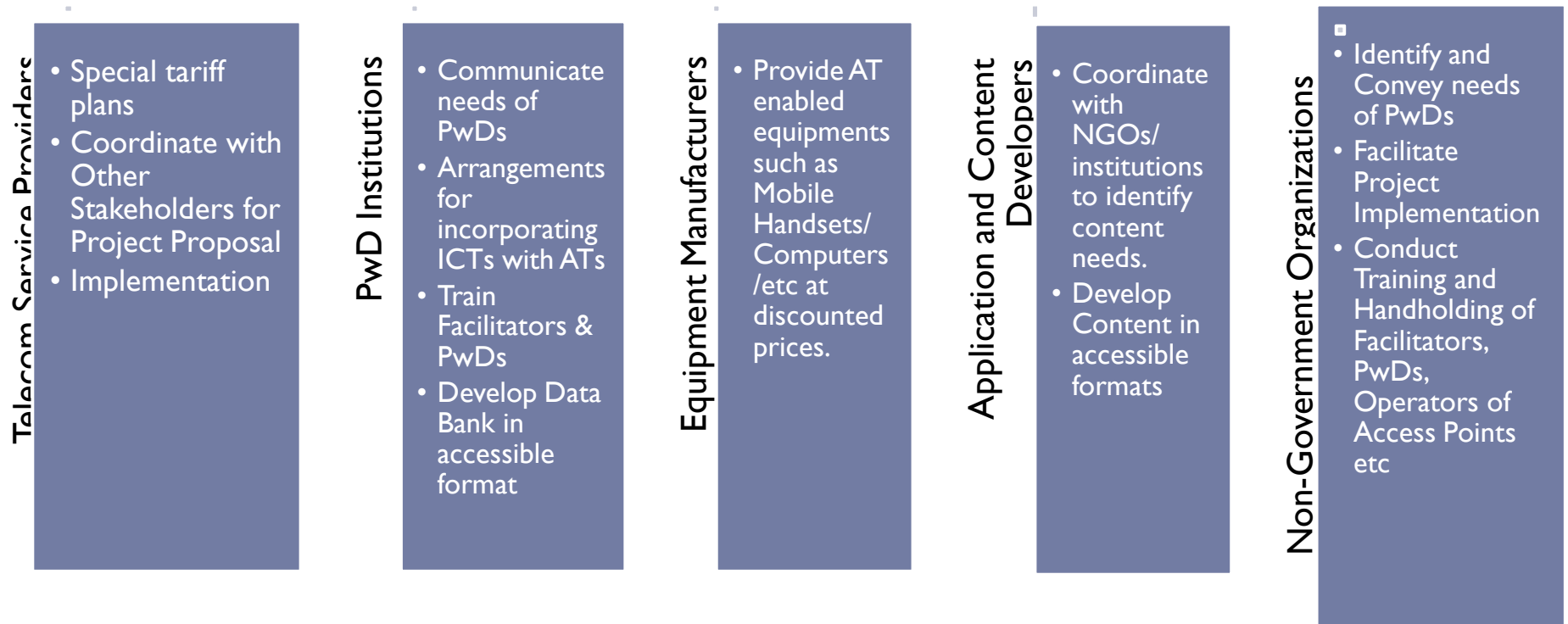
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Challenges



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Anticipated Roles of Stakeholders



Concerned Ministries and Departments of Gol

- To offer necessary assistance and support to USOF and other project participants to ensure realization of objectives of this scheme

USOF

- Provide subsidy for selected projects launched under the scheme
- Evaluate and compile scheme results for further scaling up of projects.

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Anticipated Outcomes from the Pilots

Social, Political and Economic Empowerment of PwDs in Rural India

- Enrichment of lives with access to information, skills and employment opportunities
- Enhancement of self-reliance of PwDs and their integration with society

Demonstration of utility and benefits of AT enabled ICTs

- Demand Side: To PwDs and their families, and to institutions/organizations
- Supply Side: To service providers, equipment manufacturers and content providers etc

Impetus to the development of

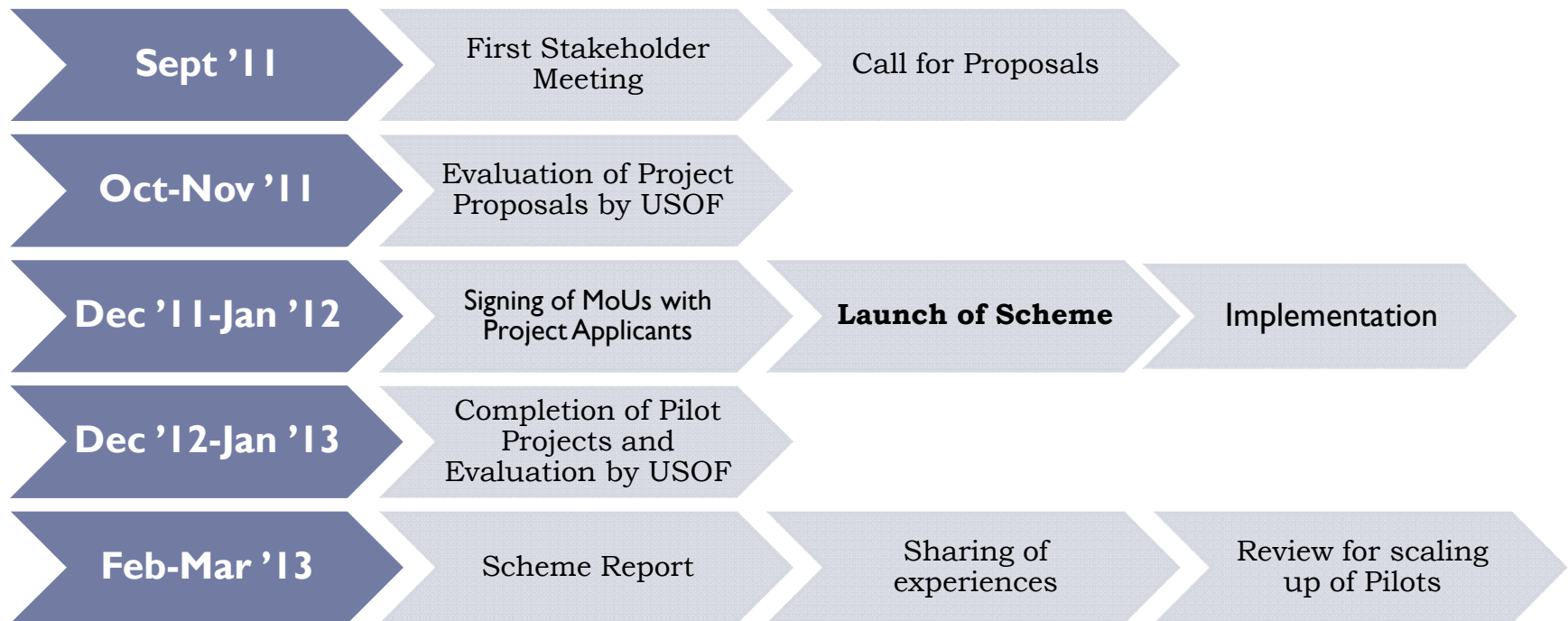
- Assistive Technologies
- Relevant content in accessible formats in regional languages.

Scaling up of such initiatives to the national level under

- Commercial and CSR agendas of service providers/telecom manufacturers/content providers

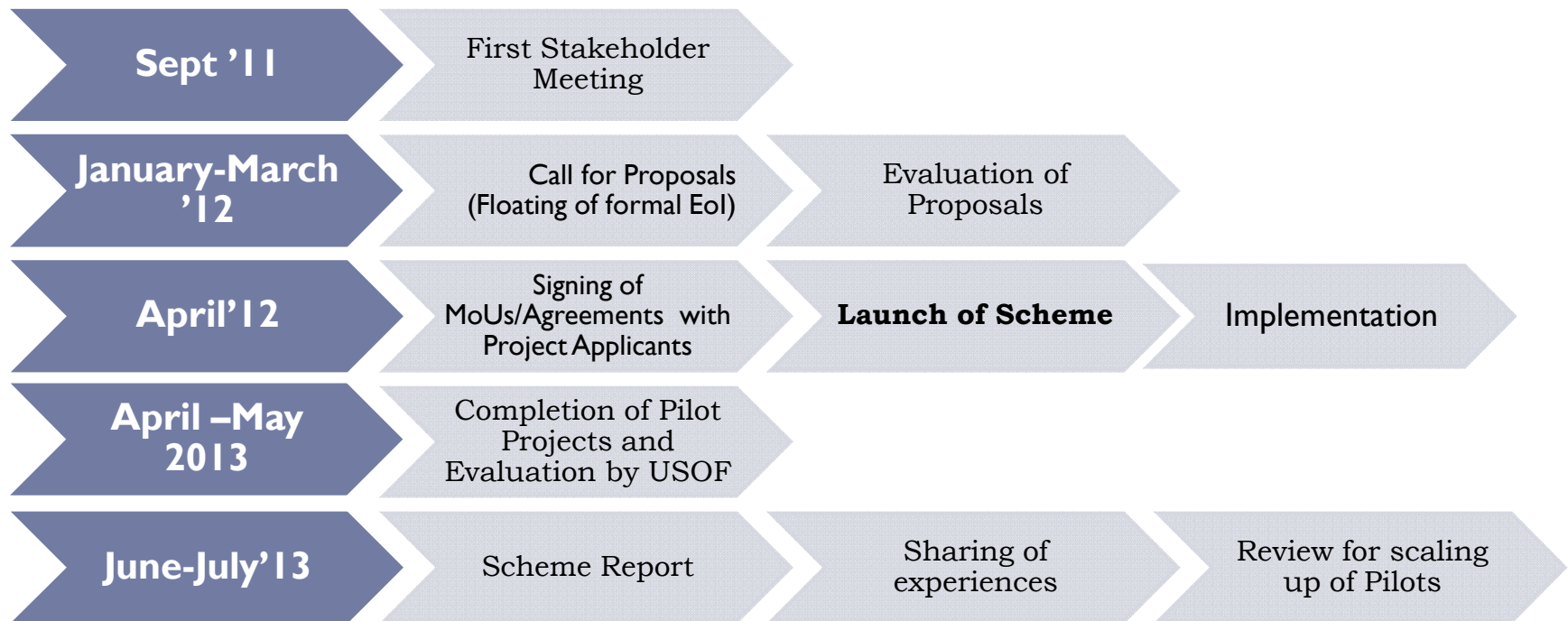
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Programme Timelines



USOF's Initiative (Revised) Programme Timelines

(Based on Actual Date of Scheme Approval by Competent Authority)



Going Forward...

THANK YOU!

**ALL INPUTs & UPDATEs WILL BE PLACED
ON
USOF WEBSITE**

AT

<http://www.usof.gov.in/usof-cms/disabled.htm>