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IBM Offers “Watson Assistant for Citizens” to Speed Reliable Responses to COVID-19 Questions

Bengaluru, Karnataka, India - 02 Apr 2020: With COVID-19 affecting [204 countries, areas and territories](#), IBM (NYSE: [IBM](#)) is helping government agencies, healthcare organizations and academic institutions throughout the world use AI to put trusted data and information into the hands of their citizens.

With a flood of information requests from citizens, wait times in many areas to receive answers can exceed two hours. Available for no charge for at least 90 days and available to our client's citizens online, IBM Watson Assistant for Citizens on the IBM public cloud, brings together [Watson Assistant](#), [Natural Language Processing](#) capabilities from IBM Research, and state-of-art enterprise AI search capabilities with [Watson Discovery](#), to understand and respond to common questions about COVID-19.

“While helping government agencies and healthcare institutions use AI to get critical information out to their citizens remains a high priority right now, the current environment has made it clear that every business in every industry should find ways to digitally engage with their clients and employees,” said **Rob Thomas, General Manager, IBM Data & AI**. “With today's news, IBM is taking years of experience in helping thousands of global businesses and institutions use Natural Language Processing and other advanced AI technologies to better meet the demands of their constituents, and now applying it to the COVID-19 crisis. AI has the power to be your assistant during this uncertain time.”

"In just the last three months, the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has altered nearly every aspect of our personal and professional lives. As a trusted technology leader, running the most critical systems in the world, IBM is committed to marshaling the company's resources to help clients, governments, health agencies, and academic institutions, monitor and manage the outbreak through various initiatives. In these challenging times, its critical to offer accurate information to all constituents and hence a clear opportunity to apply AI to quickly answer common questions at a very large scale. IBM developed the Watson Assistant for Citizens to provide an AI-powered virtual agent that helps governments deliver accurate information to their citizens without overwhelming contact centers where human agents are needed to help those who truly need them. To introduce this offering in India, IBM Research has trained Watson Assistant to answer queries in English and Hindi to enable various Government agencies and Departments to offer this service to its constituents. " - **Gargi Dasgupta, Director - IBM Research India and CTO IBM India /South Asia**.

Watson Assistant for Citizens leverages currently available data from external sources which include the: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and other government sources for prevention & treatment related guidance, citizen welfare schemes in India, as well as global resources such as World Health Organization (WHO) and U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). IBM already is delivering this service across the United States, as well as engaging with organizations globally in Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain and more.

Here are examples where IBM is engaging with government and healthcare agencies on Watson Assistant for Citizens:

- **ARKANSAS (US): University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences** – In 9 days, deployed a virtual agent so citizens can get their questions answered quickly about testing, symptoms or resources. Information is

automatically sent to a mobile COVID-19 triage clinic electronically to help speed response. Average registration time has been reduced by fifty percent for those using the agent.

- **GEORGIA (US) : Children's Healthcare of Atlanta** - The "COVID-19 Pediatric Assessment Tool" walks parents through a series of questions and results in suggested next steps that a parent should take. Recommendations on next steps are made according to the healthcare system's established protocols.
- **TEXAS (US): City of Austin** - COVID-19-related information will soon be available for citizens with interactive conversation on where to get testing and other information.
- **CZECH REPUBLIC: Czech Ministry of Health** - COVID-19 virtual agent called "Anežka" advises citizens about prevention, treatment and other related topics on the coronavirus.
- **GREECE: Hellenic Ministry of Digital Governance** - COVID-19-related information for citizens and interactive conversation on preventive and precautionary measures issued by the Greek Government.
- **POLAND: Polish Ministry of Health** - COVID-19 information for Polish citizens on common questions such as symptoms and recommended procedures to follow in case of infection.
- **SPAIN: Andalusian Government** - A virtual agent to help respond to citizen's queries about COVID-19 is available through the app "Salud Responde" and the [Public Agency for Health Emergencies \(EPES\)](#) website, built also in collaboration with the Andalusian Health Service (SAS).
- **UK: National Health Service Wales: Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board** - CERi, an English and Welsh-speaking virtual assistant, will soon go live to support healthcare workers and the general public in Wales who need information or have questions on the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 along with general information about the virus.

Using information provided by clients, Watson Assistant for Citizens automates responses to frequently asked questions about COVID-19 that come in via text, such as “What are its symptoms?,” “How do I clean my home properly?” and “How do I protect myself?”

State and local government agencies, hospitals or other healthcare organizations can choose to customize the solution to address citizen questions specific to their area or region, including “How many cases till date in Mumbai?,” “Which essential services are open during a lockdown?” and “Where can I get tested in Bangalore?”

IBM is offering Watson Assistant for Citizens for no charge for at least 90 days and will assist with initial set up, which can typically be done in a few days. The initial solution is available in English and is being tailored to include Indian languages as well such as Hindi, so you can ask questions such as “**क्या मैं अपना पैन कार्ड ऑनलाइन अपलोड कर सकता हूँ?**”, or “**मैं अपने पैन कार्ड को कैसे अपलोड कर सकता हूँ?**”, and “**मैं अपने पैन कार्ड को कैसे अपलोड कर सकता हूँ?**”

The offer includes access to 15 pre-trained COVID-19 “ intents ” or queries. “ Intents ” are purposes or goals that are expressed in a customer's input, such as answering a question. By recognizing the intent expressed in a customer's input, the Watson Assistant service can choose the correct dialog flow for responding to it.

Clients can also work with IBM to customize the offering on top of the base model and intends to include information related specifically to a city or region for specific information that is pertinent to those citizens or constituents, as well as integrate with client's back-end ERP systems.

IBM is also working with global businesses in other industries to apply AI to help them respond to COVID-19 and

reimagine the way work will get done in this new operating environment.


For more information about IBM efforts around COVID-19,
visit <https://www.ibm.com/covid19> and <https://newsroom.ibm.com/covid-19>.

For more information about Watson Assistant for Citizens visit <https://www.ibm.com/watson/covid-response>.

To try out a version of Watson Assistant for Citizens for India in English/Hindi,
visit https://researcher.watson.ibm.com/researcher/view_group.php?id=8069

For more information about how businesses in any industry can use Watson Assistant,
visit: <https://www.ibm.com/cloud/watson-assistant/>.

For further information: ANTONETTA KUMAR, Email - antonkum@in.ibm.com

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