

Citizen's Charter

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this Chapter, you will learn about:

- Basic Concept of Citizen's Charter
- Objectives Behind Citizen's Charter
- Six Principles of the Citizen's Charter
- Rationale of a Citizen's Charter
- Significance of Citizen Charters
- International Context
- Citizen's Charter in India
- Components of a Citizen's Charter
- Implementation of the Citizen's Charter
- Inadequacies and Ground Realities Adversely Affecting the Effectiveness of Citizen's Charters
- Lessons Learnt in Quality Assurance from Examples Worldwide
- Assessment of Citizen's Charter
- Suggestions for Strengthening Citizen's Charter for More Effective Governance
- Second ARC on Citizen's Charter
- The Sevottam Model
- The ARC Seven-Step Model for Citizen Centricity
- Right to Service Acts
- Model Citizen's Charter
- Practice Questions

13.1 BASIC CONCEPT OF CITIZEN'S CHARTER

In any liberal democratic society, the quality service provided by the government is one of the key principles that ensure an inclusive, sustainable and equitable development. When such service is provided with unparalleled levels of transparency, accountability and responsiveness, it enables the citizens to cooperate in the developmental process towards achieving effective growth. It is here that the concept of Citizen's Charter plays a vital role. The prime objective of issuing a Citizen's Charter by an organisation is to improve the quality of services offered.

The Citizen's Charter is not legally enforceable and, therefore, is non-justiciable. However, it acts as a tool for facilitating the delivery of services to citizens with specified standards, quality and time frame, etc., with commitments from the Organisation and its clients. By clarifying the citizens of the process involved in delivering public services besides providing other similar information, the Citizen's Charter assists the government in its efforts to provide more responsive and citizen-friendly governance.

13.2 OBJECTIVES BEHIND CITIZEN CHARTERS

1. Appropriate statement of service standards based on public expectations.
2. Simplification of rules, regulations, guidelines and working norms for better delivery of services.
3. Time bound grievance redressal of citizens.
4. Established network with functionaries promoting service group participation.
5. Incorporating a culture of transparency within the organization.
6. Wide publicity of standards of organization.
7. More independent and impartial grievance redressal.
8. Consistent and continual improvement in quality of services to the beneficiaries.
9. Clarifications of the objectives of organization functionaries.
10. Developing better responsiveness and reciprocity of the organization.
11. Modification in services to account to the changing needs of the people or service group.

13.3 SIX PRINCIPLES OF THE CITIZEN'S CHARTER

The six principles of the Citizen's Charter movement as originally framed were as follows:

- (i) **Quality:** Improving the quality of services
- (ii) **Choice:** To be offered wherever possible
- (iii) **Standards:** Specifying what to expect and how to proceed if standards are not met
- (iv) **Value:** For the taxpayers' money
- (v) **Accountability:** Individuals and Organisations
- (vi) **Transparency:** Rules/Procedures/Schemes/Grievances

13.4 RATIONALE OF A CITIZEN'S CHARTER

Citizen's Charter is a written, voluntary declaration made by organizations about service standards, choice, accessibility, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability. However, wide the range of services may be, it should be in accordance with the expectations of citizens. Therefore, it becomes one of the most efficient ways of defining the nature of services offered and standards of service delivery.

Citizens are entitled to expect a minimum quality of service as they fund the government either directly or indirectly through taxes. They would like to be assured that the price they pay is reasonably compensated with the quality and quantity of services provided. A Citizen's Charter serves this purpose as it acts as the meeting point of the expectations of the citizen and the level of service provided by the organizations. Another major significance of Citizen's Charters is that it helps in instilling a sense of duty into the minds of public officials, rather than being tyrants who hold power.

The role of Citizen's Charters should not be restricted to remain as simple documents of assurances or policy frameworks. Instead, it should be an organic set of initiatives and ideas to elevate the level of standards and service delivery and increase public participation in the best way possible.

If successfully implemented, the Charter can enable the following:

- Improved service delivery
- Greater responsiveness of officials towards the public
- Greater public satisfaction with services

13.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF CITIZEN CHARTERS

The advent and growth of Citizen's Charters was the result of a number of countries opting for globalization, privatization and liberalization as the base of their fiscal policy. As this made the government from being the only provider to becoming one of the providers in the market, there was a need for better efforts to ensure service delivery with the best standards. With the entry of multiple service providers, the citizen's status elevated from being a mere beneficiary to becoming a consumer, who was provided with opportunities for comparative decision making. It therefore becomes essential for the governments to bring in reforms into its mode of operations to improve service quality and service delivery. In India, the Right to Information (RTI) Act recommends the provision of Citizen's Charter in all government service outlets. Though it is not a legally binding requirement, it helps in conveying the message of transparency and accountability within the organization.

13.6 INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

As mentioned earlier, the United Kingdom was the first country to introduce the Citizen's Charter initiative. Following suit, many other countries started implementing similar programmes. Though they featured specific regional customizations, the principle of transparency and accountability was common among all of them.

1. Australia - Service Charter, 1997
2. Belgium - Public Service Users' Charter, 1992
3. Canada - Service Standards Initiative, 1995
4. France - Service Charter, 1992
5. India - Citizen's Charter, 1997,
6. Malaysia - Client Charter, 1993,
7. Portugal - The Quality Charter in Public Services, 1993
8. Spain - The Quality Observatory, 1992.

13.7 CITIZEN'S CHARTER IN INDIA

The concept of Citizen's Charter made its entry into India in 1997. It was introduced at the conference of chief ministers, 1997, held at Delhi. One of the outcomes of the conference was the decision to formulate Citizen's Charters, especially in those sectors that have a large public interface (e.g., Railways, Telecom, Posts, Public Distribution Systems, etc.).

13.8 COMPONENTS OF A CITIZEN'S CHARTER

A good Citizen's Charter should have the following components:

- (i) Vision and Mission Statement of the Organisation
- (ii) Details of business transacted by the organisation
- (iii) Details of 'Citizens' or 'Clients'
- (iv) Statement of services including standards, quality, time frame, etc., provided to each citizen/client group separately and how/where to get the services
- (v) Details of Grievance Redress Mechanism and how to access it
- (vi) Expectations from the 'citizens' or 'clients'
- (vii) Additional commitments such as compensation in the event of failure of service delivery.

13.9 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CITIZEN'S CHARTER

It was decided that the Citizen's Charter project would be done on a pilot basis initially and taken across the country later. For this purpose, the banking sector was chosen, because of its customer service orientation and its advantage in terms of speeding up the process of incorporation, owing to its information technology infrastructure.

The pilot study was done in three major National level banks (e.g., Punjab National Bank, Punjab & Sind Bank and Oriental Bank of Commerce). The assessment of their implementation revealed the following inadequacies.

13.10 INADEQUACIES AND GROUND REALITIES ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CITIZEN'S CHARTERS

1. At times, Citizen's Charter implementation was not pragmatic because of field functionaries and their awareness.
2. Inadequacies in capacity building among functionaries.
3. Lack of change in orientation, education even among the service groups.
4. Inadequacies in bringing changes in the work culture of the organization.
5. Rigidity of law and some legal hurdles and lack of proper modification of legal environment account to the new environment.
6. Gaps in the perception of field reality by drafters and the lack of effective participation of field level functionaries in the formulation process.
7. Lack of impartial and independent or effective ombudsman system.
8. Prevailing culture of corruption, non-transparent, procedural control and bureaucratic control.
9. Formulation of Charters without following a consultative process.
10. Lack of knowledge on the philosophy, goals and main features of the Charter, among service providers.
11. Poor publicity given to the Charters.
12. Poor allocation of funds for awareness generation on Citizen's Charter or for orientation of the staff on various components of the Charter.
13. Poor design and content.

14. Inadequate ground work in terms of assessment and reforming its processes to deliver the promises made in the Charters.
15. Lack of public awareness of the concept of Citizen's Charter.
16. Charters are rarely updated, revised or reviewed.
17. Lack of precision on standards and commitments in several cases.
18. In some cases, Charters have become a one-time exercise, frozen in time.
19. On the commitment front, the Charter programme has been throttled on account of poor planning and resource commitment for publicity.
20. Citizen Charters have still not been adopted by all ministries/department.

13.11 LESSONS LEARNT IN QUALITY ASSURANCE FROM EXAMPLES WORLDWIDE

- (i) Involve customers in the creation of guarantees, standards, redress policies, complaint systems, and customer service agreements.
- (ii) Educate customers about the services that an organisation provides, so they will have realistic ideas of the services that are available and will understand their own responsibilities.
- (iii) Keep pressure on from outside the organization to create meaningful guarantees, standards, redress policies and complaint systems.
- (iv) Create an external review process to approve guarantees, standards, redress policies, complaint systems, and the performance measurement processes associated with them.
- (v) Publicize your standards, guarantees, redress policies, complaint systems, and results.
- (vi) Involve frontline employees in creating standards and other tools – and in figuring out how to meet them – to help them buy in.
- (vii) Empower frontline staff to make decisions.
- (viii) Use standards, guarantees, complaints, and customer councils to redesign, reengineer and restructure.
- (ix) Study other organizations including private companies, to see how you might re-think, redesign and reengineer.
- (x) Back up your quality assurance approach with training, mentoring, learning networks and other support for employees.
- (xi) Do not create a separate unit to do this; integrate customer quality assurance into your strategic and performance management systems.
- (xii) Make sure your executive leadership is seriously committed.

13.12 ASSESSMENT OF CITIZEN'S CHARTER

A Government of India-sponsored assessment of Citizen's Charter in 2008 made following observations, which may be noted in the context of the Charters which were reviewed for their content:

- a. Most of the Charters under review failed to communicate effectively the 'vision' of the organisation. 'Vision' statement was missing from nearly 60% of the reviewed Charters.

- b. The articulation of the 'mission' was also not found in nearly 40% of the reviewed Charters.
- c. The client groups/stakeholders/users were not identified at all in nearly 30% of the Charters reviewed. The identification was, at best, partial in case of many others.
- d. Service standards and timelines have been neglected in the Charters of most organisations. The service delivery standards were not mentioned in about 43% of the Charters reviewed. The service quality standards were missing from about 38% of them.
- e. As high as 40% of the Charters reviewed failed to give information about the processes of obtaining service benefits.
- f. Nearly 62% of the Charters reviewed did not offer any clue regarding the system for obtaining suggestions from the client groups/stakeholders/citizens. None of the Charters gave information about time frame for review of the suggestions.
- g. Almost 41% of the Charters under consideration did not indicate any timeframe for redress of public grievances.
- h. None of Charters reviewed gave any indication of a system of resolution offered to the client groups/stakeholders/citizens if the organisations or any of its levels failed to fulfil their commitments.
- i. Even a mention of an essential Charter component like Information Facilitation Counters (IFC) was missing from nearly 62% of the Charters and as high as 72% of them remained silent about the functions performed by the IFC and the facilities available therein.
- j. Nearly 77% of the Charters reviewed remained silent about the RTI Act and about 94% of them failed to even mention the Information Handbook brought out under the RTI Act.
- k. None of the Charters reviewed gave any indication regarding the periodicity for a review of the Charter. The commitment to review itself was rare.

13.13 SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING CITIZEN'S CHARTER FOR MORE EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

1. Involving stakeholders in fixing standards.
2. Creating awareness among people.
3. Wide publicity about Citizen's Charter.
4. Clear channel of hierarchy to be mentioned for effective grievance redressal.
5. Independent and impartial Ombudsman for grievance redressal.
6. Appropriate modification with passage of time.
7. Changing legal procedures.
8. To change the culture of organization to training them in client orientation and participatory management.
9. Performance audit with Citizen's Charter.
10. Active HRD in organization, effective personnel policies to get rid of incompetent.
11. Linking performance, service delivery with performance appraisal.
12. The need for citizens and staff to be consulted at every stage of formulation of the Charter.
13. Orientation of staff about the salient features and goals/objectives of the Charter; vision and mission statement of the department; and skills such as team building, problem solving, handling of grievances and communication skills.

14. The need for creation of database on consumer grievances and redress.
15. The need for wider publicity of the Charter through print media, posters, banners, leaflets, handbills, brochures, local newspapers, etc., and also through electronic media.
16. Earmarking of specific budgets for awareness generation and orientation of staff.
17. Replication of best practices in this field.

13.14 SECOND ARC ON CITIZEN'S CHARTER

13.14.1 Making Citizen's Charters Effective: An Agenda for Reform

The Commission has briefly dealt with the issue of Citizen's Charters in its Fourth Report on 'Ethics in Governance'. The Commission observed that in order to make these Charters effective tools for holding public servants accountable, the Charters should clearly spell out the remedy/penalty/compensation in case there is a default in meeting the standards spelt out in the Charter. It emphasized that it is better to have a few promises which can be kept than a long list of lofty but impractical aspirations.

13.14.1.1. Internal Restructuring Should Precede Charter Formulation

As a meaningful Charter seeks to improve the quality of service, mere stipulation to that effect in the Charter will not suffice. There has to be a complete analysis of the existing systems and processes within the organization and, if need be, these should to be recast and new initiatives adopted. Citizen's Charters that are put in place after these internal reforms will be more credible and useful than those designed as mere desk exercises without any system re-engineering.

13.14.1.2. One Size Does Not Fit All

This huge challenge becomes even more complex as the capabilities and resources that governments and departments need to implement Citizen's Charters vary significantly across the country. Added to these are differing local conditions. The highly uneven distribution of Citizen's Charters across States is clear evidence of this ground reality. For example, some agencies may need more time to specify and agree upon realistic standards of service. In others, additional effort will be required to motivate and equip the staff to participate in this reform exercise. Such organizations could be given time and resources to experiment with standards, grievances redressal mechanisms or training. They may also need more time for internal restructuring of the service delivery chain or introducing new systems. Therefore, the Commission is of the view that formulation of Citizen's Charters should be a decentralized activity with the head office providing broad guidelines.

13.14.1.3. Wide Consultation Process

Citizen's Charters should be formulated after extensive consultations within the organization followed by a meaningful dialogue with civil society. Inputs from experts should also be considered at this stage.

13.14.1.4. Firm Commitments to be Made

Citizen's Charters must be precise and make firm commitments of service delivery standards to the citizens/consumers in quantifiable terms wherever possible. With the passage of time, an effort should be made for more stringent standards of service delivery.

13.14.1.5. Redressal Mechanism in Case of Default

Citizen's Charter should clearly lay down the relief which the organization is bound to provide if it has defaulted on the promised standards of delivery. In addition, wherever there is a default

in the service delivery by the organization, citizens must also have recourse to a grievances redressal mechanism. This will be discussed further in the next chapter on grievances redressal mechanisms.

13.14.1.6. Periodic Evaluation of Citizen's Charters

Every organization must conduct periodic evaluation of its Citizen's Charter preferably through an external agency. This agency while evaluating the Charter of the organisation should also make an objective analyses of whether the promises made therein are being delivered within the defined parameters. The result of such evaluations must be used to improve upon the Charter. This is necessary because a Citizen's Charter is a dynamic document which must keep pace with the changing needs of the citizens as well as the changes in underlying processes and technology. A periodic review of Citizen's Charter thus becomes an imperative.

13.14.1.7. Benchmark Using End-User Feedback

Systematic monitoring and review of Citizen's Charters is necessary even after they are approved and placed in the public domain. Performance and accountability tend to suffer when officials are not held responsible for the quality of a Charter's design and implementation. In this context, end-user feedback can be a timely aid to assess the progress and outcomes of an agency that has implemented a Citizen's Charter. This is a standard practice for Charters implemented in the United Kingdom.

13.14.1.8. Hold Officers Accountable for Results

All of the above point to the need to make the heads of agencies or other designated senior officials accountable for their respective Citizen's Charters. The monitoring mechanism should fix specific responsibility in all cases where there is a default in adhering to the Citizen's Charter.

13.14.1.9. Include Civil Society in the process

Organizations need to recognize and support the efforts of civil society groups in preparation of the Charters, their dissemination and also facilitating information disclosures. There have been a number of States where involvement of civil society in this entire process has resulted in vast improvement in the contents of the Charter, its adherence as well as educating the citizens about the importance of this vital mechanism.

13.15 THE SEVOTTAM MODEL

Sevottam is a Service Delivery Excellence Model which provides an assessment-improvement framework to bring about excellence in public service delivery. The need for a tool like Sevottam arose from the fact that Citizen's Charters by themselves could not achieve the desired results in improving quality of public services. Besides, the absence of a credible grievances redressal mechanism within organizations was also becoming a major impediment in improving service delivery standards. Thus, it was felt that unless there is a mechanism to assess the outcomes of various measures, the reform initiatives would not yield the desired results. The Sevottam model works as an evaluation mechanism to assess the quality of internal processes and their impact on the quality of service delivery.

The Sevottam model has *three* modules.

1. The first component of the model requires effective Charter implementation, thereby opening up a channel for receiving citizens' inputs into the way in which organizations

determine service delivery requirements. Citizen's Charters publicly declare the information on citizens' entitlements thereby making citizens better informed and hence empowering them to demand better services.

2. The second component of the model, 'Public Grievance Redress' requires a good grievance redressal system operating in a manner that leaves the citizen more satisfied with how the organization responds to complaints/grievances, irrespective of the final decision.
3. The third component 'Excellence in Service Delivery' postulates that an organization can have an excellent performance in service delivery only if it is efficiently managing well the key ingredients for good service delivery and building its own capacity to continuously improve service delivery.

13.16 THE ARC SEVEN-STEP MODEL FOR CITIZEN CENTRICITY

This model draws from the principles of the IS 15700:2005, the Sevottam model and the Customer Service Excellence Model of the United Kingdom. Each organization should follow a step-by-step approach, which would help it in becoming increasingly more citizen centric. This approach should be followed not only by the top management but also by each unit of the organization that has a public interface (i.e; top management has the dual responsibility of setting standards for itself as well as guiding the subordinate offices in setting their own standards).

- a. *Define* all services which you provide and identify your clients.
- b. *Set* standards and norms for each service.
- c. *Develop* capability to meet the set standards.
- d. *Perform* to achieve the standards.
- e. *Monitor* performance against the set standards.
- f. *Evaluate* the impact through an independent mechanism.
- g. *Continuous improvement* based on monitoring and evaluation results.

13.17 RIGHT TO SERVICE ACTS

In India, the *Right to Public Services Acts* have been legislated by states to guarantee time-bound delivery of services in both 'Government to citizen (G2C)' and 'Government to Business (G2B)' relationships. The laws also provide for the mechanism to punish officials, who fail to do so on time. Similarly, the Right to Service acts are meant to reduce corruption among government officials and to increase transparency and public accountability. Madhya Pradesh became the first state in India to enact Right to Service Act on 18 August 2010.

The recent trend of Right to Public Service Acts can be tracked back to the Citizen's Charter movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Though these Charters detailed what citizens could expect from the government, it was felt that these Charters lacked the precision necessary to be effective.

To address these perceived failures, the Right to Public Service Acts require that the services are clearly defined and must either be completed or denied (with explanation) within a specific timeframe. Failing which they will be required to pay a monetary penalty. In stacking a monetary penalty against officials who fail to provide service, the Right to Service Acts take

inspiration from the RTI Act, 2005. It is believed by many that the RTI Act's threat of a triggered monetary penalty was a vital part of its perceived success.

13.18 MODEL CITIZEN'S CHARTER



Agriculture Insurance Company of India Ltd.

Citizens' Charter

Our Mission

- ✔ To provide comprehensive risk solution through various agricultural and allied insurance products to the farming community
- ✔ To be the most preferred service provider of agricultural and allied insurance products and global leader in this segment

Our Values

- ✔ Highest priority to customer needs
- ✔ High standards of public conduct
- ✔ Transparency in operations

Our Commitments

- ✔ To respond to all commercially viable crop insurance requirements of the farmers, within three months of receipt of completed information
- ✔ To ensure availability of the relevant information about insurance products to prospective customers in a lucid manner
- ✔ To promote customer awareness of various crop insurance products through various media
- ✔ To obtain, wherever necessary, a written proposal from the customer and to issue the insurance document accordingly
- ✔ To issue all necessary insurance documents, within fifteen days of receiving completed information
- ✔ To settle all claims within thirty days of receiving subsidy towards premium/claims and completion of all requirements
- ✔ To set up Customer Service Desks in all Regional Offices and to spread awareness about the same; also to guide the customers about the procedure and status of his claims
- ✔ To set up a Grievance Redressal mechanism in every Regional Office; also to guide the customers about the same
- ✔ To provide all the above services to the citizens without any gratification

13.19 PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the Purpose motive and mechanism existing in India to enforce 'Sevottam Model'.
2. 'An empirical evaluation of implementation Citizen's Charter in India is not much encouraging'. In the light of the statement discuss the hurdles in Implementation of Citizen's Charter and suggest remedies.
3. 'Citizen's Charter is not a ritual, it is a democracy intensifying concept'. In the light of the above statement analyse Citizen's Charter, with special reference to improve them.
4. 'he Citizen's Charter does not by itself create new legal rights, but it surely helps in enforcing existing rights'. Comment.
5. Explain Citizen Charter and examine its position in India with the examples of few best practices in use.
6. Discuss the various factors that should be considered before formulating Citizen's Charter in any organization.