

Citizen's Charter

INTRODUCTION

The functions of government fall into two broad heads: legal exercise of authority and provision of services. Modern states are welfare states and provide a wide range of public services to their citizens. The services cover areas such as education, health, housing and transport. Services also include such requirements as a driving license, telephone connection, gas connection, tax refund, Aadhaar card, passport, and extracts from public records of one's property, educational qualification and date of birth. Citizens often experience considerable difficulty in securing timely, reliable and quality services from government agencies. Citizen Charters are a means of solving the day to day problems which citizens experience while dealing with organisations providing public services.

The Conservative party government under John Major was the first to introduce the citizen's charter (1991). Citizen's Charters seek to continuously improve the quality of public services for the people so as to respond to their needs and wishes. Tony Blair's Labour government relaunched Citizen's Charters in 1998 under the name "Services First".

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

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

The Labour Government later expanded them into the following nine principles of Service Delivery:

- (i) Set standards of service;
- (ii) Be open and provide full information;
- (iii) Consult and involve;

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- (iv) Encourage access and promote choice;
- (v) Treat all fairly;
- (vi) Put things right when they go wrong;
- (vii) Use resources effectively;
- (viii) Innovate and improve;
- (ix) Work with other service providers.

The UK's Citizen's Charter initiative was followed by similar programmes in other countries like Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Portugal, and Spain. Some of these adopted the service quality model of the "Total Quality Management" (TQM) movement. For improving public services, some countries used methods such as the Business Excellence Model, Charter Mark and ISO 9000.

THE INDIAN SCENARIO

At a Conference of Chief Ministers held on 24 May, 1997 an "Action Plan for Effective and Responsive Government" at the Centre and State levels was adopted. It was decided that the Central and State Governments would formulate Citizen's Charters, starting with those sectors that have a large public interface (e.g., Railways, Telecom, Posts, Public Distribution Systems and the like).

The Charters have to cover various aspects of an organization. We discuss them below.

Vision and Mission Statements

The Citizen's Charter should begin with a clear statement of vision. Vision reflects the final objectives of an organization and the manner in which it seeks their achievement. A clear vision helps an organization to plan for and achieve its goals. The vision of an organization should be known to its personnel and the citizens it serves. Public bodies have to prepare their vision through a consultative process, involving multiple points in the organization as well as citizens, client groups or stakeholders. This will ensure that the vision will have considerable acceptability.

Mission Statement

The 'mission' statement outlines the specific objectives which propel the organization in tune with its vision. An organization needs to think of the manner in which the vision is to be realised. This would help it in framing the mission in concrete rather than in vague terms.

Identification of Services

The Charter should clearly specify the services, which an organization would provide to attain its mission and vision. This should list all the services, which would be made available through its various agencies. Some Charters give information about 'details of business transacted by the organization'. An agency may use other expressions like 'Our Function', or 'Our Duties and Responsibilities'. But the main point is that all services should be clearly mentioned in the Charter.

Identification of Levels

Organizations operate at multiple levels; depending on the allocation of responsibilities and authority, particular levels deal with specific client groups/users/stakeholders. Irrespective of whether the

organizations mention 'details of business', 'commitments', 'functions' or 'services' in their charters, there should be a clear identification of the levels at which specific services would be provided. Citizens/clients will know the levels at which they can access a specific service and not waste their time and energy in locating the service delivery point. The charter should make it clear whether it applies to all the agencies that come under the Ministry or Department or the agencies have their own specific Charters.

Identification of Client Groups/Stakeholders/Users

A citizen charter has to clearly mention its client groups/ stakeholders/ users. This will lead to better service and greater interaction with them. One common weakness of citizen charters is their failure to clearly identify the client groups/ stakeholders/ users with reference to the services offered. This deficiency needs to be remedied. Sometimes organizations will not have specific client groups with whom they have regular dealings. Some organizations may have direct clients, who pay for the service accessed. But others may have users who may access the service by virtue of being citizens. In some cases, despite not being the users of a service, citizens or groups may feel concerned about the organizational decisions as they have to bear the fall-outs of the decisions, as in case of many decisions related to industrial or mining projects, which affect the local people even if they are not users or clients. But public organizations have to respond to all citizens irrespective of their status as their clients.

Big organizations with many client groups may have different services for different client groups. In such a situation, the Charter should list out the services for each client group and the 'commitments' for each of such services. This can be fine tuned further by listing out the specific 'commitments' at each level of the organization and the 'commitments' in terms of the special client groups like the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, religious minorities and weaker sections.

Specification of Time-Frames for Each Service

The charter has to show the time by which a particular service will be provided. By mentioning the time, the organization will prevent undue public expectations and can work within reasonable schedules. Citizens can plan things from their end, and look for alternatives where available. Evidently, some services are perennial. Examples are services which Department of Telecommunications, Indian Railways, Department of Posts and Department of Drinking Water Supply provide. However, even here services like delivery of post, payment of postal deposits, and installation of telephone connections and reservation/ cancellation of reservation of railway tickets can be time bound.

Specification of Time-Frames at Each Level

Time-frame for service delivery is required for each level at which specific services are delivered. They need to be observed. Ideally, organizations should publish information showing the extent of adherence to time-frames at each level. Public sharing of a comparative picture of service delivery from various levels in the organization is likely to introduce competition and improve performance.

Specification of Service Quality Standards

Organizations have to show the service quality standards in the charters. Based on this information, citizens can look for other available sources of service or may seek enhancement of the proposed

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standards. Organizations can also exercise internal controls based on their declared standards. While declaring standards, organizations have to follow both public policy requirements and clients' interests. For example, in passport delivery, clients prefer speed, but public policy interest requires proper scrutiny.

Specification of Service Delivery Standards

Citizen charters need to include clear commitment on service delivery standards such as timeliness, access, accuracy, reliability, affordability, responsiveness, fairness, sensitivity, and courtesy. These standards should be stated in the form of commitments and not simply as targets. Standards have to be measurable so that the organization can concretely present its performance. Standards should be widely publicized and made known to people through suitable media advertisements.

Providing Information about the Public Grievance Redressal Procedures

Grievance redressal helps an organization in correcting its functioning. The charter should encourage the citizens/clients to ventilate their grievances. It should clearly lay down the grievance redressal procedures so that citizens/users/clients/stakeholders who have any grievances can seek redressal. This mechanism has to be taken seriously since unsolved citizen problems can damage an organization's image.

Providing Information about the Public Grievance Redressal Mechanisms

Citizens need to be informed about the grievance redressal mechanism available to them at various levels in the organization. A senior officer should be made responsible for inviting and processing 'grievances' for redressal. His/her name, designation, office room and telephone numbers and e-mail address should appear in the Charter. The officer in-charge of the grievances should ensure that they are received, diarized, acknowledged in a day or two and examined. Organizations should have mechanisms such as a committee for review, weekly or monthly meetings with concerned officers at various levels and reports on the number and type of grievances received.

Information about the Time-frame for the Public Grievance Redressal

Time limit for looking at complaints is an important item in the citizen's charter. The time-frame laid down for grievance redressal should be realistic and has to be observed by the organization. Otherwise, the system will lose credibility. A complaint may finally be accepted or rejected. If a complaint is rejected, the reasons for its rejection have to be clearly stated. A provision for appeal should be made for those citizens who still want to pursue their complaint after its rejection.

To summarize, a Citizen's Charter includes: vision and mission statements; identification of services; identification of levels; identification of client groups/ stakeholders/users; specification of time-frames for each service; specification of time-frames at each level; specification of service quality standards; specification of service delivery standards; and providing Information about the grievance redressal procedures.

To be effective, citizen's charters need to give clear information on the following aspects:

- ❑ Processes/ Procedures for accessing services including about forms and charges
- ❑ Contact points for reaching service providers including addresses, telephones and e-mail

- ❑ Location and functions of Information Facilitation Counters (IFCs)
- ❑ Handbook on the scheme brought out under the RTI Act, 2005
- ❑ Monitoring mechanism for citizen's charter
- ❑ Procedure for receiving suggestions and comments from public

ASPECTS OF A CITIZEN'S CHARTER

Rationale

A Citizen's Charter expresses the understanding between citizens and the provider of a public service. The service provider is usually the government department or the agency which provides the particular service. If the service is outsourced to a non government agency, that agency becomes the service provider. For example, a birth certificate may be provided by a village panchayat or a municipality or a city corporation. A citizen charter mentions the quality of service and the time for its delivery. It is a statement about the rights of the public and the obligations of the public servants.

Citizens have a right to a particular quality of service which meets their needs and is provided efficiently at a reasonable cost. The Citizen's Charter is a written, voluntary declaration by service providers. It specifies the level, quality or standard of the relevant services. It indicates the alternatives open to people or whether they can get similar services from other service providers. The charter indicates the procedure through which citizens can get the service from its provider. It assures that all eligible persons will be served in a non discriminatory manner. The relevant details about the service are made public and fully disclosed to ensure transparency. Its details are placed in the public domain so that all can know about it. Nothing about it is kept secret or hidden. Finally, a Citizen's Charter contains accountability clauses. It specifies the persons responsible for providing the services, and whom the citizens can approach for redressal if they fail to get the service as promised.

Citizen's charter borrows the idea of customer service from the private sector. No business can survive without a satisfied customer base. Successful businesses focus on product quality, after sales service and redressal of customer complaints. Citizen's Charters represent one application of the concept of reinventing government on the managerial model of successful private enterprises. In this model, the service providing department or its official is assigned the role of a manager. The citizens are treated as the customers of the department for that service. The service becomes the product which the department provides. The quality of service resembles the product standards of the business terminology.

This model of service delivery also seeks to change the attitudes of government servants. Traditionally, government servants in India have considered themselves as agents exercising government power. They like to lord it over people. The service delivery model casts government servants in a different role as providers of services to people. They have to render service with sympathy and ensure public satisfaction. People pay taxes and government servants, while providing services, have to ensure that people get value for their money.

The Citizen's Charter should not make promises which it cannot deliver. It should mention those services which are permissible according to the programme or policy guidelines and

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within available resources. It should not consist only of assurances or vague promises. It should adopt suitable procedures based on the nature of the service. The citizen charter is a set of ideas to raise the level of standards and service delivery and increase public participation, in the most appropriate way. If properly implemented, the Charter will promote transparency and accountability.

A Citizen's Charter can lead to:

- ❑ Improved service delivery;
- ❑ Greater responsiveness of officials towards the public; and
- ❑ Greater public satisfaction with services.

Steps in formulation

Following steps are necessary for preparing a citizen's charter.

- (i) Formation of Task Force consisting of the concerned officials for preparing the charter
- (ii) Listing the major services which the Organization will provide and those who will be provided the services (clients or customers in business terminology)
- (iii) Consultation with Clients/Stakeholders/Staff (Primarily at cutting-edge level or implementation level) and their representative associations
- (iv) Preparation of Draft Charter
 - Circulating the draft charter to all concerned for getting their comments/ suggestions;
 - Revising the Charter after considering the suggestions
- (v) Consideration of the Charter by Core group (Core group is another group of officials which makes a peer review of the charter)
- (vi) Modification of Charter by the Ministry/Department on the basis of suggestions/ observations of the Core Group
- (vii) Approval by the Minister-in-charge
- (viii) Submission of a copy of the charter to the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (In State governments, the copy will be sent to the State Administrative Reforms department)
- (ix) Formal issue/release of Charter and uploading it on website
- (x) Sending copies to People's Representatives and all stakeholders
- (xi) Appointment of a Nodal Officer to ensure effective implementation

Model Guidelines

The purpose of a Citizen's Charter is to reduce the dissatisfaction of the citizen/consumer/ customer with the quality of service which government departments and public sector entities provide. To serve this end, Citizen Charter documents should adopt the following guidelines.

- (i) The Charter must be simple.
- (ii) While preparing the Citizen's Charter, senior officers or experts must consult both cutting edge staff who will implement it and the citizens (or their representative organisations) who will use it.

- (iii) Merely pasting the Citizen's Charter on an office notice board or wall will not produce attitudinal change in the service staff. The necessary climate has to be generated through regular training and motivation of staff.
- (iv) The Charter should clearly enumerate the services on offer.
- (v) Against each available service, the Charter should mention the persons eligible for it, the entitlement of the user, service standards and remedies available to the user in case of breach of standards.
- (vi) Procedures for availing the services and the payable charges should be shown on website/ display boards/ booklets/ inquiry counters.
- (vii) It should be made clear that all attempts will be made to provide the services as indicated in the Charter, but that they are not justiciable (or cannot be enforced by courts).
- (viii) The Charter should contain provisions for getting feedback (experiences of users), performance audit (which shows whether the services are being delivered as promised in the charter) and a schedule for reviewing the Charter every six months based on experience.
- (ix) If an organization provides distinct services, separate Charters can be prepared for each distinct service area.

General Structure

We have already mentioned the components of Citizen's Charters. More broadly, the Charter should begin with a brief statement about the services to be delivered. It has to mention the public interface of the service, for example, ticket reservation or passenger amenities in Railways, mail delivery, or premium services of postal department. The commitment to standards will specify the time limits and quality of service. The Charter will specify the staff or the service deliverers — where they can be found and what to expect of them. The Charters have to keep the people informed and especially consider the information they are likely to need for availing the service. The Charter has to consider any problem that may lead to failure of service delivery, and inform people about whom to contact in such contingencies and what help they can get from the personnel designated for this purpose. The Charter can mention how citizens can help the organization with their suggestions or in other ways.

Do's and Don'ts for Implementing the Charters

Based on its experience with the implementation of Citizen's Charters, the Administrative Reforms department has formulated the following positive and negative guidelines for their implementation.

1. Proceed steadily.
2. List areas of interface.
3. Introduce the Charter through small steps.
4. Involve customers and staff in formulating and implementing the Citizen Charters.
5. Prepare a Master Plan for formulation and implementation of Charter over five years along with a budget for the period.
6. Win consumer confidence with small, highly visible measures.
7. Be ready to introduce changes in the Charter based on experience.
8. Inform people of the proposed commitments.

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9. Use simple language.
10. Train the concerned staff.
11. Delegate powers.
12. Set up systems for feedback and independent scrutiny.

The following errors have to be avoided while preparing the Charters.

- ❑ Rushing with the Charters
- ❑ Being unrealistic
- ❑ Taking on excessive commitments
- ❑ Top-down formulation and implementation without inputs from operational levels
- ❑ Preparing a package for the whole Ministry/Department/Organization
- ❑ Promising more than what one can do
- ❑ Looking upon any Citizen Charter as a one-time exercise, with a final outcome
- ❑ Informing the citizens before one is ready to deliver the service
- ❑ Centralization
- ❑ Continuing blindly without regular periodic reassessment of performance

Features of a Good Charter

The elements of a good Charter are:

- (i) Focus on Customer Requirements;
- (ii) Simple Language;
- (iii) Service Standards;
- (iv) Effective Remedies;
- (v) Training;
- (vi) Delegation;
- (vii) Feedback Mechanism;
- (viii) Close Monitoring;
- (ix) Periodic Review.

Citizen's Expectations

Citizens have the following expectations from Government Departments/Service Providers:

- (i) Reliability or consistency in performance;
- (ii) Responsiveness or timely service;
- (iii) Credibility or having customer interest at heart;
- (iv) Empathy or attention to customer's needs;
- (v) Courtesy and care or physical evidence of willingness to serve.

To sum up, the six principles of Citizen's Charters are: published standards; openness and clarity of information; choice and consultation; courtesy and helpfulness; redress when things go wrong; and value for money.

A Model Format for Citizen's Charter

1. The Aim/purpose of this Charter is to work for better quality in public service.
2. (Enumeration of services delivered by the department) We deliver the following services:-
 (a) (b) (c) (d)
3. Our aim is to achieve the following service delivery/quality parameters

Nature of Service	Service Delivery Standard	Time limit (days/hours/minutes)
(a)
(b)
(c)
4. Availability of Information: Information on the following subjects can be obtained from our officers listed below.

1 Information on	2 Name of the officer	3 Designation
4 Located at	5 Telephone/Fax/e-mail	
a.		
b.		
c.		
5. For information outside office hours, please contact ——— Tel no———
6. Availability of prescribed forms

Title of the Form	Fee to be paid
(a)
(b)
(c)
7. Forms are also available on the worldwide web at www (Where applicable) and can be downloaded at
8. Complaint redressal systems

Courteous and helpful service will be extended by all the staff. If you have any complaints to make with respect to the delivery of the above standards, you are welcome to register your complaints with the following officers:

Name	Designation	Located at	Telephone/Fax/e-mail
(a)
(b)
(c)

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We have also created a website for registering complaints at [www.....](#) You are welcome to use this facility.

9. A centralized customer care centre/grievance redressal centre has also been established at _____ where you can lodge your complaint.
10. All complaints will be acknowledged by us within _____ days and final reply on the action taken will be communicated within _____ days
11. Consultation with our users/stakeholders
 - We welcome suggestions from our users.
 - We conduct _____ polls
 - We hold periodical _____ meetings with users/user representatives and if you wish to be associated with this please contact _____ at _____.
 - Please also enter your details at our website [www ...](#) indicating your willingness to be available for consultation and survey on the points listed in the Charter.
12. We seek your co-operation on the following:

Citizen's Charter is a joint effort between us and you to improve the quality of service provided by us and we request you to help us in the following way (give details relevant to the departments concerned)

(a)

(b)

13. Guide Book/Hand Book/Consumer Helpline

We have published a Handbook for the guidance of our customers. Please contact _____ Officer for more details.

Our helpline number is _____

Our customer information centre is located at _____ Phone No. _____

Other information

(a)

(b)

We are committed to constantly revise and improve the services being offered under the Charter.

LET US JOIN HANDS IN MAKING THIS CHARTER A SUCCESS!

Working of Citizen's Charters

There have been various evaluations of Citizen's Charters. The findings have been generally negative. But there have been notable successes too. Among the successful examples which find mention in

an official document of the Ministry of Personnel are: Regional Transport Office, Hyderabad; Jan Sewa Kendra, Ahmedabad; Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Chennai and Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board. However, there may be many other success stories. At least, the concept of a citizen's charter is now firmly lodged in the minds of governments and citizens. By January 2011, Central Government departments finalized 131 citizens charters and state government departments finalized 729 Citizen's Charters.

In an early study which the Ministry of Personnel commissioned, the following weaknesses were found. The impact of Citizen's Charters was reduced due to poor service delivery standards and under-performance. There was inadequate feedback from citizens about quality of service, limiting the impact of the Charter. The lack luster performance can be traced to various reasons such as:

- ❑ Absence of a planned approach to publicity
- ❑ Limited training and stakeholder involvement
- ❑ Charter as one among many initiatives
- ❑ Bureaucratic style of functioning
- ❑ No systematic identification of stakeholders
- ❑ Lack of citizen friendly approach and absence of avenues for the stakeholders to interact or give feedback
- ❑ Poor complaint redressal systems
- ❑ Poor systems in place
- ❑ Outdated processes
- ❑ Inadequate staff training
- ❑ **Centralization**
- ❑ Lack of transparency
- ❑ Communication failure
- ❑ Lack of credibility and lack of confidence in the system.

Solutions

- ❑ A holistic approach to publicity through press, electronic media and user involvement
- ❑ 'Meet the citizen' programmes by the departments
- ❑ Changing the behaviour of the officers and staff through coaching, training and incentive systems
- ❑ Creating customer friendly environment in the offices
- ❑ Improving accessibility of officers and staff
- ❑ Training of staff at all levels
- ❑ Decentralization and delegation of authority
- ❑ Technology upgradation
- ❑ Process review and restructuring

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- ❑ Customer confidence building measures, sharing information and reports with users of the service
- ❑ Setting up consultation committees welcoming negative feedback and removing fear from customers
- ❑ Assuring public that information from feedback will be used to improve services.

Bill on the Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of Their Grievances.

Government has since decided to pass a law laying down obligations of every public authority towards citizens, specifying delivery of goods and services in a time-bound manner and providing for a grievance redressal mechanism for non-compliance of Citizen's Charter. A Bill was introduced in parliament in 2011 for this purpose.

Background

The Bill deals with two rights of citizens. One is time-bound delivery of goods and services. The other is redressal of grievances. The Bill mentions Citizen's Charter; it is the document that defines the standard of services which a public agency provides. It also gives the time limit for providing the goods and services.

In 2007, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission recommended that Citizen's Charters should stipulate penalties for non-compliance. In 2008, a parliamentary Standing Committee (on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice) recommended giving statutory status to grievance redressal mechanisms. The Central Information Commission also recommended that grievance redressal systems should be strengthened to reduce the public tendency to seek redressal of their grievances through use of the Right to Information Act. It has been found that applicants often resort to RTI Act not to get information but to have their problems resolved. The President, in her address to Parliament in June 2009, stated that the government would focus on ensuring effective delivery of public services. The Standing Committee that examined the Lokpal Bill, 2011 recommended the creation of a separate legislation to deal with Citizen's Charters and grievance redressal. The Parliament on August 27, 2011 while adopting the 'Sense of the House' Resolution on Lokpal, agreed in principle to the establishment of a Citizen's Charter. Currently, government departments deal with grievances internally. Persons may also approach the High Court through writ petitions. Further, as on March 2012, several states had enacted laws providing for grievance redressal mechanisms.

Main Provisions of the Bill

- ❑ The Bill requires public authorities to publish a Citizen's Charter within six months of enactment of the Bill.
- ❑ The charter should specify the services and the quality of services to be provided by the public authority.
- ❑ The heads of departments are responsible for disseminating and updating the Citizen's Charter.

- ❑ Public authorities include: (a) constitutional and statutory authorities; (b) entities established under any government notification; and (c) public-private partnerships. They also include NGOs that are substantially government funded, government companies, and companies that provide services under a licence or a statutory obligation.
- ❑ Public authorities are required to establish Information Facilitation Centres for efficient and effective delivery of services and redressal of grievances. Information Facilitation Centres may include customer care centres, call centres, help desks and people's support centres.

Public Grievance Redressal Commissions

- ❑ The Bill establishes Central and State Grievance Redressal Commissions. Each Commission would consist of a Chief Commissioner and upto 10 Commissioners. The Commissioners would be appointed by the President (Governor) on the recommendation of a selection committee.
- ❑ This committee would consist of the Prime Minister (Chief Minister), the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (Legislative Assembly) and a sitting Supreme Court (High Court) judge.
- ❑ The Commissioners should be: (a) present or former Secretaries to the central (state) government; or (b) present or former Supreme Court judges or Chief Justices of a High Court (district court judges for 10 years, or High Court judges); or (c) eminent persons with at least 20 years (15 years) of experience in social sectors with a postgraduate degree in a relevant sector.
- ❑ The Commissioners may be removed by an order of the President (Governor) under certain conditions.

Complaint Mechanism

Complaint: Any citizen may file a complaint covering: (a) failure in delivery of goods or services listed in the Citizen's Charter; (b) the functioning of the public authority; and (c) any violation of a law, policy, programme, order or scheme. Complaints have to be redressed within 30 working days.

Complaints have to be made to the Grievance Redressal Officer (GRO). GROs are to be appointed by each public authority at the central, state, district, sub-district, municipality and panchayat levels.

- ❑ The GRO is required to: (a) ensure that grievances are redressed within 30 working days; (b) ensure that disciplinary action is taken against a defaulting officer if he has acted negligently; and (c) recommend penalties and compensation where an individual has wilfully neglected to deliver services or there is a prima facie ground for a case under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. The GRO has to inform the complainant about the action taken on the complaint.
- ❑ **Appeal:** The orders of the GRO may be appealed before the Designated Authority (DA). The DA shall be an officer above the rank of the GRO and outside the concerned public authority.
- ❑ The DA shall dispose of appeals within 30 working days of their receipt. If a complaint with the GRO is not redressed within 30 working days, the GRO has to forward it as an appeal to the DA. The DA may penalize the defaulting officers.

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- ❑ **Second Appeal:** The DA's orders may be appealed before the Central or State Public Grievance Redressal Commission within 30 working days. Appeals relating to complaints arising out of functioning of the central (state) departments would lie before the Central (State) Commission. The Commissions have to dispose of the appeal within 60 working days.
- ❑ **Third Appeal:** In relation to an offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, an appeal against the decision of the Commissions shall lie with the Lokpal or the Lokayukta.
- ❑ **Suo motu mechanism:** The Central and State Commissions can suo motu refer matters related to non delivery of goods and services to the heads of government departments. The Commissions may also initiate suo motu inquiry if they believe that there are reasonable grounds to inquire into the matter.
- ❑ **Complaints may also be made to the Commissions in certain cases.** It is the duty of the Commissions to inquire into complaints by persons: (a) who are unable to file appeals before the DA; (b) who are refused redress of grievances; (c) whose complaints are not disposed of within 30 days; and (d) who are denied access to the citizen's charter because it has not been prepared or has not been widely disseminated.

Penalties

- ❑ **GRO:** The Bill requires the GRO to recommend penalties to the DA when: (a) he is convinced that the default was due to wilful neglect by an officer; or (b) when there is prima facie evidence of corruption.
- ❑ **DA and Commissions:** The Bill empowers the DA and the Commissions to impose a maximum penalty of Rs 50,000 upon the defaulting officer and the GRO. Penalties may be imposed upon the defaulting officer when he has acted in a malafide manner or has failed to discharge his responsibility in a proper manner. A portion of the penalty may be awarded as compensation to the complainant.
- ❑ If there is evidence of corruption against the defaulting officer, the DA and the Commissions would have to refer the matter to appropriate authorities. Additionally, the DA may initiate proceedings in such cases.
- ❑ **Disciplinary proceedings** may be initiated by the GRO, DA and the Commissions against the defaulting officer if there is evidence of malafide action.
- ❑ In any appeal proceeding, where it is alleged that the grievance has not been redressed by the GRO, the burden of proof shall be on the GRO.

Main Issues

Critics have pointed out certain legal and other difficulties involved in the provisions of the bill. These are briefly outlined below.

- ❑ Parliament may not have the jurisdiction to regulate the functioning of state public officials as state public services fall within the purview of state legislatures.

- ❑ This Bill may create a parallel grievance redressal mechanism as many central and state laws have established similar mechanisms.
- ❑ Companies that render services under a statutory obligation or a licence may be required to publish Citizen's Charters and provide a grievance redressal mechanism.
- ❑ The Commissioners may be removed without a judicial inquiry on an allegation of misbehaviour or incapacity. This differs from the procedure under other legislations.
- ❑ Appeals from the Commissions' decisions on matters of corruption will lie before the Lokpal or Lokayuktas. The Lokpal Act has come into force recently, and some Lokayuktas have not been established.

Summary

- ❑ The functions of government fall into two broad heads: legal exercise of authority and provision of services. Modern states are welfare States and provide a wide range of public services to their citizens.
- ❑ The services cover areas such as education, health, housing and transport. Services also include such requirements as a driving license, telephone connection, gas connection, tax refund, Aadhaar card, passport, and extracts from public records of one's property, educational qualification and date of birth.
- ❑ Citizens often experience considerable difficulty in securing timely, reliable and quality services from government agencies.
- ❑ Citizen's Charters are a means of solving the day to day problems which citizens experience while dealing with organisations providing public services.
- ❑ The Conservative party government under John Major was the first to introduce the Citizen's Charter (1991).
- ❑ Tony Blair's Labour government relaunched Citizen's Charters in 1998 under the name "Services First".
- ❑ The six principles of the Citizen's Charter movement as originally framed were – quality, choice, standards, value, accountability and transparency.
- ❑ A Citizen's Charter includes: vision and mission statements; identification of services; identification of levels; identification of client groups/ stakeholders/ users; specification of time-frames for each service; specification of time-frames at each level; specification of service quality standards; specification of service delivery standards; and providing information about the grievance redressal procedures.
- ❑ Citizen's Charters represent one application of the concept of reinventing government on the managerial model of successful private enterprises. In this model, the service providing department or its official is assigned the role of a manager. The citizens are treated as the customers of the department for that service. The service becomes the product which the department provides. The quality of service resembles the product standards of the business terminology.

17.16 Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude



- ❑ The service delivery model casts government servants in a different role as providers of services to people. They have to render service with sympathy and ensure public satisfaction.
- ❑ The Citizen's Charter should not make promises which it cannot deliver.
- ❑ Steps in formulation of a Citizen's Charter have been covered earlier.
- ❑ We have outlined the model guidelines for preparing the Citizen's Charters.
- ❑ We have detailed earlier the Do's and Don'ts for Implementing the Charters.
- ❑ We have given a model format for Citizen's Charter. Students can refer to it for background and getting a feel of the charter. Its details are unimportant.
- ❑ There have been various evaluations of Citizen's Charters. The findings have been generally negative. As we have outlined the findings in the form of points, there is no need to repeat them here.
- ❑ Government introduced a Bill titled the Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of Their Grievances.
- ❑ The main provisions of the Bill are:
 - (i) Public authorities should publish a Citizen's Charter
 - (ii) They have to specify the services and the quality of services to be provided.
 - (iii) The heads of department are responsible for disseminating and updating the citizen's charter.
 - (iv) 'Public authorities' have been defined widely covering all public or public sponsored service providers.
 - (v) Information Facilitation Centres have to be set up by each public authority.
 - (vi) The Bill establishes Central and State Grievance Redressal Commissions.
 - (vii) The Commissioners would be appointed by the President (or by Governors in States) on the recommendation of a selection committee.
 - (viii) The Bill contains a mechanism for dealing with complaints.
 - (ix) There is a provision for three appeals.
 - (x) There are provisions for penalties.
 - (xi) In relation to an offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, an appeal against the decision of the Commissions shall lie with the Lokpal or the Lokayukta.
 - (xii) We have outlined some of the issues likely to arise from the system envisaged in the Bill.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. What is a Citizen's Charter? How will it help people? What is the relation between citizen's charters and the idea of 'reinventing government'?
2. What are the six principles underlying the original Charter which John Major introduced?
3. What are the main components of a Citizen's Charter?

4. What are the steps involved in preparing a Citizen's Charter?
5. What are do's and don'ts important in preparing Citizen's Charters?
6. What are the main findings of the various evaluations of Citizen's Charters?
7. Outline the main provisions of the Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of Their Grievances Bill.

REFERENCES

-  Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions Material on citizen's charter on the website
-  Indian Institute of Public Administration Paper on citizen's charter