

Citizens' Charter

GS Paper II – Polity & Governance

INTRODUCTION

Definition: A Citizens' Charter represents the commitment of the Organisation towards standard, quality and time frame of service delivery, grievance redress mechanism, transparency and accountability.

Previous Year Questions

1. The Citizens' charter has been a landmark initiative in ensuring citizen-centric administration. But it is yet to reach its full potential. Identify the factors hindering the realisation of its promise and suggest measures to overcome them. (15 Marks, Mains 2024)
2. Citizens' Charter is an ideal instrument of organizational transparency and accountability, but it has its own limitations. Identify the limitations and suggest measures for greater effectiveness or the Citizens Charter. (15 Marks, Mains 2018)
3. Though Citizen's charters have been formulated by many public service delivery organizations, there is no corresponding improvement in the level of citizens' satisfaction and quality of services being provided. Analyze. (10 Marks, Mains 2013)

ABOUT CITIZENS' CHARTER

- **Objective:** to empower the citizen in relation to public service delivery.
- India adopted the concept in 1997, drawing from the UK's 1991 model introduced by PM John Major.
- **The Sevottam framework** (Sev + Uttam = Service Excellence) institutionalises these commitments into a measurable BIS-certified quality standard (IS 15700:2005), transforming intent into institutional accountability.
- Citizen's Charter **converts welfare-state promises into measurable service obligations.**

The Charters are expected to incorporate the following elements:

- Vision and Mission Statement
- Details of business transacted by the organisation
- Details of clients
- Details of services provided to each client group
- Details of grievance redress mechanism and how to access it
- Expectations from the clients

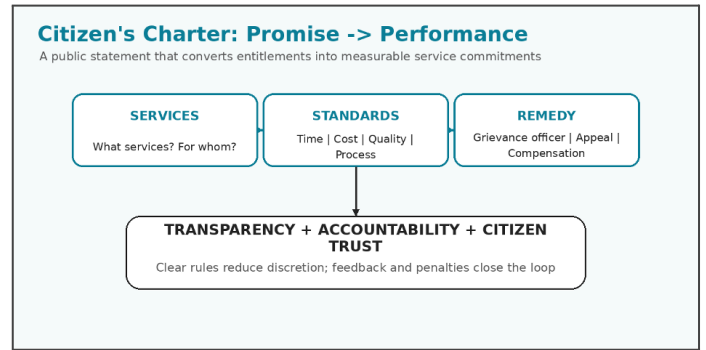


Fig. What is Citizens' Charter

CONSTITUTIONAL & LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- DPSPs (Part IV) – Collectively obligate the State toward equitable service provision
- Right to Information Act, 2005 – Citizens can seek accountability on service standards
- Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy, 2014 – Mandates citizen engagement before rule-making

KEY DATA & FACTS

- **1991:** UK launched the world's first Citizen Charter under PM John Major
- **1997:** India adopted Citizen Charters under DARPG (Dept. of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances)
- **IS 15700:2005:** Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) standard codifying the Sevottam framework
- **Sevottam has 3 modules:** (1) Citizen Charter (CC), (2) Public Grievance Redressal (PGR), (3) Excellence in Service Delivery (ESD)
- **Madhya Pradesh (2010):** First state to enact a Right to Public Services Act with time-bound delivery
- **2nd ARC (2005–2009):** 12th Report 'Citizen Centric Administration – The Heart of Governance' formally recommended Sevottam
- **CPGRAMS** (Centralised Public Grievance Redress & Monitoring System): Integrated across Central Ministries for online grievance tracking

ISSUES & CHALLENGES

- **Non-statutory:** Voluntary charters carry no legal enforceability; non-compliance attracts no penalty
- **Top-down drafting:** Citizens rarely consulted; charters designed by bureaucrats, not users
- **Low awareness:** Large sections of citizens, especially rural, unaware of their charter entitlements
- **Generic standards:** Commitments often vague and output-based rather than outcome-specific
- **Monitoring deficit:** No independent third-party audit or review mechanism in place
- **Language barriers:** Charters typically in English; rarely available in regional languages
- **Staff apathy:** Ground-level officials not trained and not incentivised to honour charter commitments
- **Digital divide:** Online grievance portals remain inaccessible to marginalised and elderly citizens

- **Sevottam adoption gap:** BIS certification remains limited; most departments uncertified
- **No revision cycle:** Outdated charters not periodically reviewed or updated

- **IS 15700:2005 certification:** Make Sevottam certification mandatory for all public service organisations
- **Capacity building:** Train frontline staff under Mission Karmayogi to embed charter culture
- **Vernacular access:** Publish charters in all scheduled languages; ensure Braille/audio versions

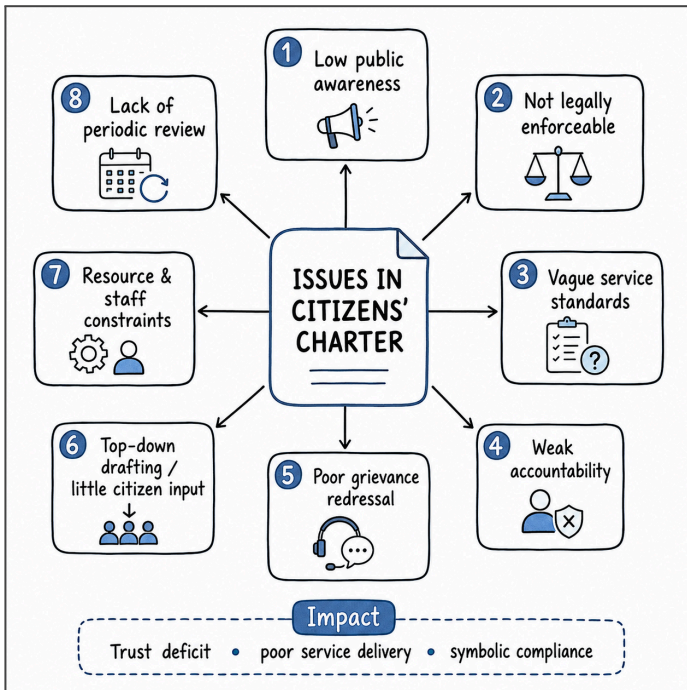


Fig. Issues in Citizens' Charter

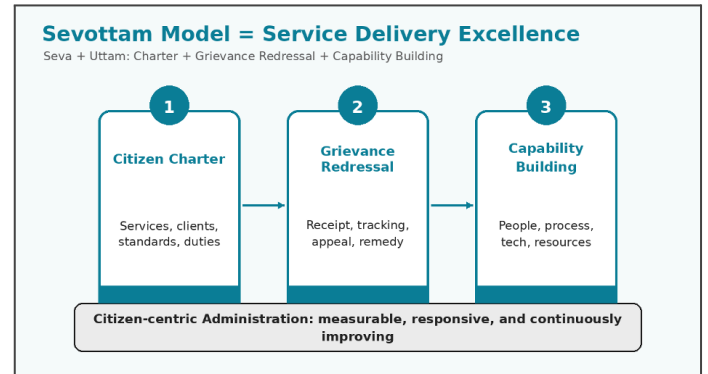


Fig. Sevottam Model

EXAM READY DIAGRAMS

2nd ARC Seven-Step Model for Citizen Centricity

Draw this as a cycle in GS2 answers



Fig. Seven Step Model for Citizen Centricity (Source: 2nd ARC)

CONCLUSION

- Citizen Charter + Grievance Redressal + Capability Building + Feedback = **Responsive Governance.**
- A well-designed Citizen Charter operationalises the principles of transparency, accountability, responsiveness and participation. Thus, it is not merely an administrative reform but a practical tool to deepen good governance at the last mile.
- As India advances toward 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance,' the effective institutionalisation of the citizens' charter framework is indispensable for trust between the State and its citizens.

CROSS LINKAGE: CURRENT AFFAIRS & BEYOND

- **Mission Karmayogi:** National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building — aims to develop citizen-centric public servants who can honour charter commitments
- **Good Governance Index (GGI):** DARPG annually ranks states on service delivery parameters including charter compliance
- **Digital India & e-Governance:** Service portals (Umang, DigiLocker) integrating charter-based delivery digitally
- **Expanding Right to Public Services Acts:** Multiple states have enacted or strengthened Right to Public Services legislation.

COMMITTEES & WAY FORWARD

Key Committees:

- **2nd ARC (2005–09), 12th Report:** Recommended mandatory Citizen Charters, Sevottam adoption, third-party audits, and citizen involvement in drafting
- **Hota Committee (2004) on Civil Services:** Emphasised accountability and defined service standards

Way Forward:

- **Statutory backing:** Enact a Central Right to Public Services Act with time-limits and penalty provisions
- **Co-creation:** Involve citizens and civil society in drafting and reviewing charters
- **Independent audit:** Mandate third-party monitoring of charter compliance; publish scorecards
- **Digital Charters:** Enable real-time service tracking via apps/portals; integrate with CPGRAMS