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Quality in Public Service Delivery

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Quality in Public Service Delivery

Practice: 6 MCQs
A service must also be good, not just delivered. Quality decides whether citizens feel good governance.

This lesson covers **quality criteria**, **Citizen's Charters and Sevottam**, **complaints and suggestions**, **CPGRAMS**, and **quality as a measure of governance**.

- **Sevottam:** created by DARPG in 2005.
- **Modules:** Charter, Grievance Redress, Capability Building.
- **Standard:** IS 15700:2005.
- **CPGRAMS:** disposal time down to 19 days.
- **CGGI 2026:** India ranks 76th of 133.


Entrance of a Passport Seva Kendra

A Post Office Passport Seva Kendra, a public service counter in Dombivli, Mumbai. Photo: Ministry of Communications (India), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0.

Contents

1. Quality criteria
2. Charters and Sevottam
3. Complaints and suggestions
4. IT and CPGRAMS
5. Quality as a measure
6. 4 understanding checks
7. Related Articles

8. 6 practice MCQs

1. What makes a public service good quality?

Delivering a service is not enough. A citizen judges it by how it was delivered. A late, rude or inconsistent service still fails the citizen.

Quality means the service meets a clear standard, every time, for every person. Think of getting a ration card. A good office tells you the time limit, treats you politely and gives the same answer to everyone.

1.1 What are the common quality criteria?

Five tests are used again and again. They are **timeliness**, **accuracy**, **courtesy**, **accessibility** and **consistency**.

- **Timeliness:** the work is done within the promised time.
- **Accuracy:** the certificate or payment is correct the first time.
- **Courtesy:** officials treat citizens with respect.
- **Accessibility:** the service is easy to reach, including for the poor and the less literate.
- **Consistency:** the same standard applies in every office and for every official.

1.2 How is quality controlled?

First, the office sets a clear standard. Then it measures real performance against that standard. The gaps it finds are then fixed. Citizen feedback shows whether the standard matches what people actually experience.

Quality control is a cycle, not a one-time check. Each round of measuring leads to a better standard.

Sources:

True or false: Sevottam is a framework for continual improvement of public service delivery.

Think it through: why is a Citizen's Charter alone not enough?

A promise needs a way to complain when it is broken. It also needs trained staff to keep it. That is why Sevottam adds redress and capability building to the charter.

2. What are Citizen's Charters and the Sevottam framework?

A **Citizen's Charter** is a public promise by an office. It states what service it gives, the standard it will meet and what to do if it fails. Sevottam turns this promise into a full quality system.

2.1 What is Sevottam?

The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) created **Sevottam** in **2005**. The name joins two Hindi words: *Seva* and *Uttam*. Together they mean "excellence in service".

DARPG built it after studying the best practices of other countries. It is a framework for continual improvement of public service delivery.

2.2 What are its three modules?

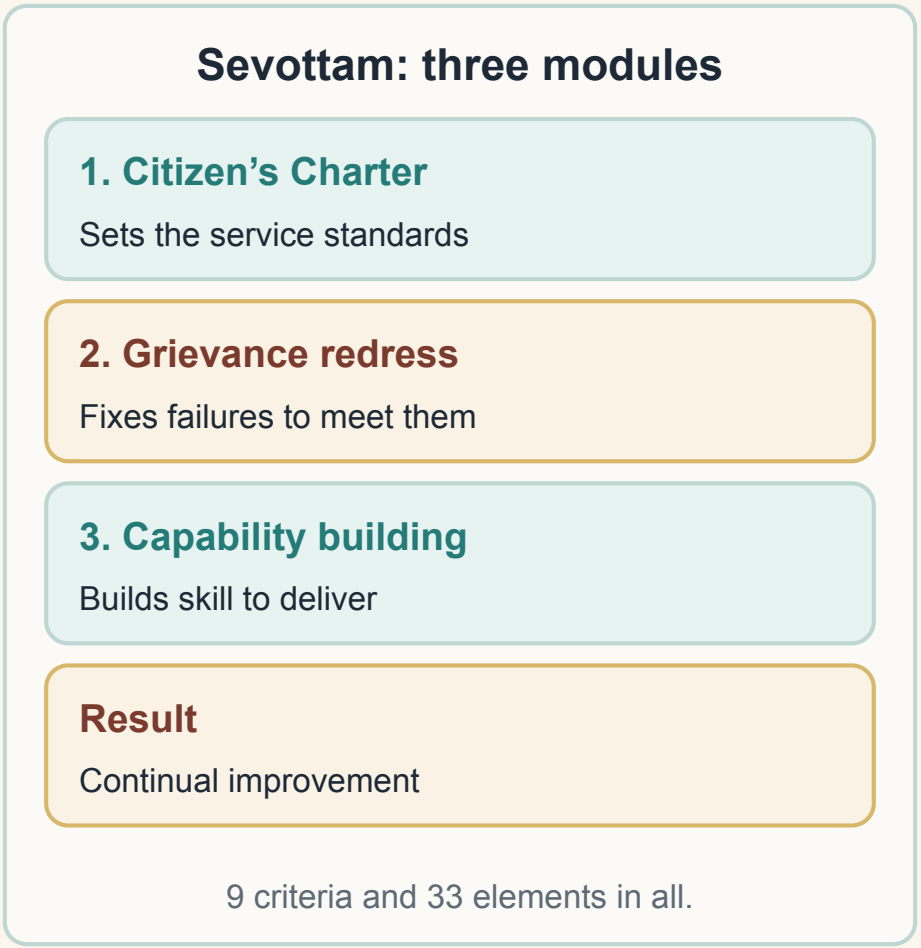
Sevottam has **three modules**. Each module has three criteria. In all, the framework has 9 criteria and 33 elements.

- **Module 1: Citizen's Charter.** It sets the standards for service delivery.
- **Module 2: Grievance Redress Mechanism.** It gives a way to seek redress when the standard is missed.
- **Module 3: Capability Building.** It builds the skills and capacity needed to meet the standards.

2.3 Is there a certifiable standard?

Yes. DARPG asked the Bureau of Indian Standards to create one. The result was **IS 15700:2005**. It is broadly based on the ISO 9000 series.

It adds citizen-centred features. These include the Citizen's Charter, a grievance redress mechanism and an Ombudsman. Offices that meet it can be certified.



The three Sevottam modules. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources:

- Sevottam: A Continuing Journey (DARPG)

True or false: Sevottam's three modules are Citizen's Charter, Grievance Redress and Capability Building.

3. How should complaints and suggestions be handled?

A promise on paper is not enough. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2nd ARC) studied this in its 12th Report, *Citizen Centric Administration: The Heart of Governance*. The Government accepted its main recommendations.

3.1 What makes a Citizen's Charter effective?

The 2nd ARC listed **nine principles**. Here are the most useful ones for exams:

- **One size does not fit all.** Each unit prepares its own charter.
- **Wide consultation,** including civil society.
- **Firm commitments** that the office can keep.
- **A redress mechanism** for default.
- **Periodic evaluation** and benchmarking against end-user feedback.
- **Officers held accountable** for results.

3.2 What must every office do about complaints?

Every office must have three things. First, a foolproof system to register all complaints. Second, a set time schedule for reply and resolution. Third, a monitoring and evaluation system to check that the norms are followed.

The Commission added that information technology can make such a system easier for citizens to use. Heads of offices are made responsible for building it.

3.3 How are citizens' suggestions used?

Every office must have a way to receive suggestions. It can be as simple as a **suggestion box**. It can also be a regular meeting with citizens' groups.

Heads of offices must follow up on the suggestions. The Commission also asked for rewards for ideas that improve services or save money.

3.4 Is there a time limit for replying?

Yes. A 2006 letter from the Government asked all Central Ministries to acknowledge public grievances within **three days**. It also asked them to send a reply within **two months**.

Sources:

- Government's decisions on 2nd ARC 12th Report (DARPG)
- Compilation of Guidelines for Redress of Public Grievances (DARPG)

True or false: one common Citizen's Charter is enough for every unit of an organisation.

4. How does information technology improve service quality?

IT makes services faster, trackable and more open. It also lets the government see where services fail. The best Indian example is **CPGRAMS**, the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System.

4.1 What has CPGRAMS achieved?

DARPG's own summary gives these results:

- **86** Ministries and Departments of the Government of India are connected.
- **36** States and Union Territories are on board.
- About **51,000** subordinate offices are created and linked.
- Average disposal time fell to **19 days** from about 200 days.
- Average disposal rate is over **90%**.

Grievances rising to about 18 lakh a year show that citizens trust the system. The data also reveals which services need repair.

4.2 What is CPGRAMS Reforms 7.0?

The 7.0 reforms aim to make the system more citizen-friendly. A person files a grievance by choosing from **drop-down menus**. This captures the problem precisely.

If the field office does not resolve a grievance, it **escalates automatically** to the next higher level. Higher officers can then supervise and monitor. The data also shows the gap between policy and delivery.

4.3 Why does quality still differ across places?

Even with IT, quality varies between **urban and rural areas** and between States. Connectivity, staff and local capacity differ. So one national standard is hard to apply everywhere.

This is why Sevottam's third module, capability building, matters. A standard needs people and tools to meet it.



CPGRAMS disposal time before and after. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources:

- CPGRAMS brochure (DARPG)

Think it through: why do complaint data help quality?

Each complaint points to a real failure. When the data is grouped, the same weak service shows up again and again. That tells the office where to fix first.

5. Why is service quality a visible measure of governance?

Citizens meet the State at the counter, the portal and the helpline. These daily contacts shape their trust. So service quality is one of the clearest signs of good governance.

5.1 What does a global index say about India?

The **Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI) 2026** was released on 18 August 2026. It ranks India **76th** among 133 governments. India remains South Asia's top performer overall.

India's score rose for a second straight year. This ended a three-year decline from 2021 to 2024. India leads South Asia in five of the 7 pillars. They include Leadership and Foresight and Strong Institutions.

5.2 How should you use this in an answer?

A dated, cross-country data point makes a Mains answer stronger. Use it as a benchmark. Then link it back to the cycle: set standards, measure, collect feedback, fix gaps.

Sources:

- Chandler Index press release (The Tribune)

True or false: India's CGGI 2026 score rose for a second straight year.

Your understanding checks

Your 4 quick checks Answered 0 of 4 · Correct 0
This score resets when the page reloads.

Practice: 6 MCQs

Practice MCQs

1. In which year did DARPG create the Sevottam framework?

A. 1997

B. 2019

C. 2011

D. 2005

See answer ↓

2. Which set lists the three modules of Sevottam?

A. Charter, Tribunal, Ombudsman

B. Audit, Budget, Enforcement

C. Planning, Funding, Monitoring

D. Citizen's Charter, Grievance Redress Mechanism, Capability Building

See answer ↓

3. IS 15700:2005, the standard for certifying Sevottam, is broadly based on which series?

A. ISO 9000

B. ISO 45000

C. ISO 27000

D. ISO 14000

See answer ↓

4. Which principle did the 2nd ARC list for making Citizen's Charters effective?

A. One national charter for all offices

B. Officers are not held accountable

C. Charters need no public consultation

D. One size does not fit all

See answer ↓

5. What did the Government's 2006 letter ask Ministries to do with public grievances?

A. Reply within one year

B. Acknowledge only after a court order

C. Reply within one day

D. Acknowledge within three days and reply within two months

See answer ↓

6. According to DARPG's CPGRAMS summary, average disposal time fell to how many days?

A. 90 days

B. 19 days

C. 200 days

D. 365 days

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **D.** The answer is **2005**. Sevottam is a framework for continual improvement of public service delivery. Why the others fail: The other years are not linked to its creation. Memory hook: Sevottam started in 2005, the same year as IS 15700. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** The answer is **Citizen's Charter, Grievance Redress Mechanism, Capability Building**. The charter sets standards, redress handles failures and capability building gives the skills to deliver. Why the others fail: The other sets are not the Sevottam modules. Memory hook: Standards, redress, capacity. ↑ Q2
3. **A.** The answer is **ISO 9000**. The Bureau of Indian Standards created it at DARPG's request, adding citizen-centred features. Why the others fail: The other series deal with environment, information security and safety. Memory hook: 9000 is for quality management. ↑ Q3
4. **D.** The answer is **One size does not fit all**. Each independent unit should prepare its own charter after wide consultation. Why the others fail: The other options reverse the Commission's principles. Memory hook: Charter per unit, not one for all. ↑ Q4
5. **D.** The answer is **Acknowledge within three days and reply within two months**. This set a time limit for acknowledging and answering grievances. Why the others fail: The other limits are not in the guideline. Memory hook: Three days, two months. ↑ Q5
6. **B.** The answer is **19 days**. It fell from about 200 days. Why the others fail: 200 days was the old figure. The others are not stated. Memory hook: From 200 to 19. ↑ Q6

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