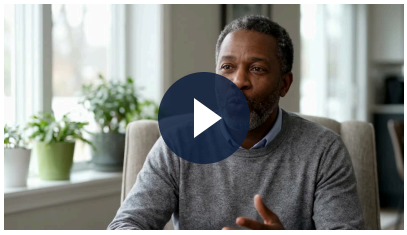
COLLECTION I — THE 12 POINTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Consensus Orientation — Citizen's Guide

How democratic governance mediates competing interests and builds community agreement.

By Daniel P. Devine · Civest Sphere · November 2026



WATCH THE VIDEO

Consensus Orientation in 60 Seconds · 0:51

Watch it on American Civic Power or YouTube.

https://www.americancivicpower.com/goodgovernance#consensus-orientation

What it means

Consensus orientation means government tries to understand every side of an issue and find solutions that most of the community can accept. It doesn't mean everyone agrees. It means differences are worked through fairly instead of steamrolled.

Why it matters

Decisions that ignore large parts of a community tend to be fought, delayed and reversed. Building broad agreement takes longer up front but produces more durable results.

Signs it's working

- Major projects go through community input before plans are final.
- Officials meet with groups that disagree with them.
- Compromises are explained publicly, including what each side gave up.

- Bipartisan or cross-community votes on big decisions.

Warning signs

- Decisions announced as finished deals with no room for input.
- Opponents treated as enemies rather than residents.
- Policies that flip back and forth with every change in control.
- Public meetings that turn into shouting matches because no one feels heard.

What you can do

1. When you disagree, start by asking how others see the issue and why.
2. Bring specific, workable alternatives to meetings, not just objections.
3. Build coalitions with neighbors who see things differently but share a goal.
4. Ask officials how they've included people who disagree with them.

Related points

Participation, Equity & Inclusiveness, Strategic Vision.

Last reviewed November 2026. This guide is general information, not legal advice. Laws, deadlines and procedures change, so confirm details with the official source before you act.

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