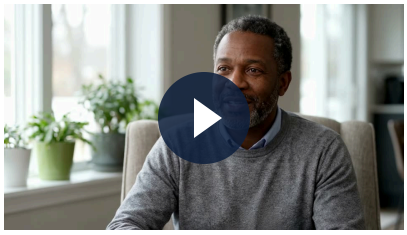
COLLECTION I — THE 12 POINTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Participation — Citizen's Guide

The many forms civic participation takes, from voting to public comment to community boards.

By Daniel P. Devine · Civest Sphere · November 2026



WATCH THE VIDEO

Participation in 60 Seconds · 0:56

Watch it on American Civic Power or YouTube.

https://www.americancivicpower.com/goodgovernance#participation

What it means

Participation means residents have real, accessible ways to shape decisions: voting, speaking at meetings, commenting on proposals, serving on advisory boards, organizing and running for office.

Why it matters

Decisions made without the people affected tend to miss what matters. Participation brings local knowledge into government and builds trust in the results.

Signs it's working

- Meetings are held at times and places working people can attend, with remote options.
- Proposals have public hearings and comment periods before decisions are made.
- Advisory boards and committees have open seats and clear ways to apply.

- Turnout is healthy, including in local elections.

Warning signs

- Hearings scheduled in the middle of the workday with little notice.
- Public comment taken only after a decision is already made.
- The same few voices at every meeting.
- Low turnout that no one in office seems worried about.

What you can do

1. Make sure you're registered, and vote in every election. See *How to Register to Vote in New York*.
2. Attend one local meeting this season. See *How to Attend a Public Meeting*.
3. Submit a written comment on a proposal that affects you. See *How to Submit a Public Comment*.
4. Apply for a local advisory board, or consider running yourself. See *How to Run for Local Office*.

Related points

Responsiveness, Equity & Inclusiveness, Local Power.

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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