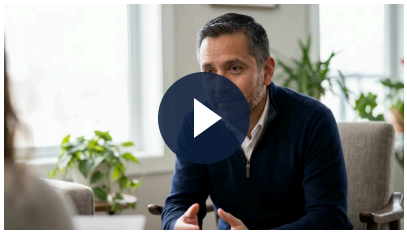
COLLECTION I — THE 12 POINTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Responsiveness — Citizen's Guide

What responsive government looks like and how to engage when institutions fall short.

By Daniel P. Devine · Civest Sphere · November 2026



WATCH THE VIDEO

Responsiveness in 60 Seconds · 0:53

Watch it on American Civic Power or YouTube.

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

What it means

Responsive government acts on residents' needs and concerns within a reasonable time. Calls and emails get answered, problems get fixed, and public input actually changes decisions.

Why it matters

When government doesn't respond, people stop asking. Responsiveness is how residents know their participation counts.

Signs it's working

- Constituent calls and emails get a real reply.
- Service requests like potholes or code complaints are tracked and closed.
- Officials can point to decisions they changed because of public input.

- Emergencies get fast, clear communication.

Warning signs

- Messages that go unanswered for weeks.
- The same complaint raised at meeting after meeting.
- No way to track a service request.
- Public input collected but never acknowledged.

What you can do

1. Put requests in writing and keep a record of dates and replies.
2. Follow up politely after two or three weeks, and ask for the staff member handling it.
3. If you get no response, raise it during public comment at the next meeting.
4. See *How to Contact Your Representatives, and Get a Response* for what makes a message effective.

Related points

Participation, Accountability, Equity & Inclusiveness.

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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