Ten Traits of Good Government™

While the nature, purpose & structure of governmental institutions vary, below is a list of characteristics that are commonly shared among those public organizations that excel in a representative democracy. To exemplify ***Good Government*** an entity demonstrates that the organization is:

1. **Respectful:** **People are treated with fairness, courtesy & professionalism.**
   - Comment A. Civility & decorum are exhibited in meetings & individual interactions.
   - Comment B. The public's rights are protected, including the ability to participate in governance.
   - Comment C. Dissent, critiques & contrary views are welcomed.
   - Comment D. Differing backgrounds & attributes are appreciated & honored.
   - Comment E. The public & stakeholders are engaged proactively & routinely.
   - Comment F. Officials are mindful of the humanity of those they serve & those with whom they serve.
2. **Responsive:** **Reasonable public expectations are met in a timely manner.**
   - Comment A. Officials are compelled by a duty to serve the citizenry.
   - Comment B. Officials are receptive to & considerate of public input on public affairs.
   - Comment C. Policies & programs reflect the public's preferences.
   - Comment D. Public complaints & inquiries are responded to fully & in a timely manner.
   - Comment E. Services & programs are administered with an emphasis on customer service.
3. **Effective:** **Productivity is managed to gauge performance & achieve goal attainment.**
   - Comment A. Progress on public purposes is monitored, prioritized & publicly reported.
   - Comment B. Public resources are conserved & expended responsibly.
   - Comment C. Outputs are measured & evaluated to enhance efficiency.
   - Comment D. Programs & services align with publicly stated goals.
   - Comment E. Programs & services are assessed to ensure they serve worthwhile objectives.
4. **Transparent:** **Public has access to agency data & the decision-making process.**
   - Comment A. Meetings are conducted in a manner that facilitates public participation.
   - Comment B. Records are archived & made available to the public.
   - Comment C. The public is routinely informed of significant programs, policies & regulations.

Comment D. Engagement of the community throughout the governing process is a priority.

Comment E. Officials are accessible to the public, including their critics & the media.

Comment F. Emphasis is placed on sharing factual data with the public free of advocacy.

Comment G. Background explanations & situational context are given proactively.

Comment H. Technology is utilized routinely to educate & engage the public.

5. Competent: Officials are skilled, educated & dedicated to continuous improvement.

Comment A. Officials are gauged primarily on their capabilities to serve.

Comment B. Workforce is staffed primarily based on merit not patronage.

Comment C. Abilities to make wise decisions & provide services are maintained.

Comment D. Capacity to serve the public is expanded & refined over time.

Comment E. Officials seek & are provided continuing education & development opportunities.

Comment F. Schedules provide for rest, recouperation & replenishment to ensure continuity.

6. Ethical: Public good is paramount, self-dealing is restrained & corruption is prevented.

Comment A. Individual & organizational integrity are shared priorities among officials.

Comment B. Officials place the public's needs above their own self-interests.

Comment C. Officials behave in a responsible, trustworthy manner.

Comment D. Safeguards are in place to prevent misconduct.

Comment E. Rules & procedures are in place to avoid & disclose Conflicts of Interest.

Comment F. Officials receive periodic training & publicly commit to ethical behavior.

Comment G. Beyond following rules, officials strive to avoid the appearance of impropriety.

7. Lawful: Authority is exercised in accordance with established law.

Comment A. Officials abide by legal limitations & obligations.

Comment B. Actions conform with constitutions, statutes, regulations & judicial rulings.

Comment C. Local rules are adopted in accordance with established guidelines & procedures.

Comment D. Codes are enforced objectively & consistently.

Comment E. Institutions are structured & administered with respect for the rule of law.

8. Innovative: Modern methods are utilized to take advantage of advancements.

Comment A. New solutions are explored & contemporary means are devised.

Comment B. Learning atmospheres are cultivated to encourage modernization.

Comment C. Pilot projects & beta tests are cultural norms.

Comment D. Creativity is resourced & rewarded.

Comment E. Improvements in technology & information systems are routinely implemented.

9. Economical: Budgets are managed prudently & resources handled responsibly.

Comment A. Financial management is based on commonly accepted principles.

Comment B. Standard policies & procedures are put in place to provide uniformity.

Comment C. Contracting & debt are overseen to ensure risks are necessary & reasonable.

Comment D. Regularly scheduled public audits tracking expenses & revenues are available.

Comment E. Financial practices align with long range objectives.

Comment F. Essential services & programs are prioritized for funding allocations.

Comment G. Financial policies are in place to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

Comment H. Efficiency is achieved through the mindful utilization of available resources.

Comment I. Purchasing decisions strive to obtain the best value.

10. Accountable: Officials take responsibility for their decisions & actions.

Comment A. Decisions are made known to the public & subject to public scrutiny.

Comment B. Decision makers acknowledge, recognize & reflect on the outcomes of their actions.

Comment C. Agreements with third-party providers of public services ensure public accountability.

Comment D. Proper oversight & enforcement is provided.

Comment E. Procedures & sanctions are in place for misconduct & irresponsible behavior.

September 1, 2025. This list was compiled by Alan Bojorquez with assistance from many colleagues. Several insightful, educated & experienced city managers & public administration professors contributed to this material. These traits were inspired by the *Twelve Principles of Good Democratic Governance,* which were adopted by the Council of Europe in 2008. This information is offered for educational purposes, only. Alan may be contacted at: (512) 250-0411, *Alan@TexasMunicipalLawyers.com*, Bojorquez Law Firm, PC, 11675 Jollyville Road, Suite 300, Austin, Texas 78759, *www.TexasMunicipalLawyers.com*. Updated October 5, 2026.

For information on the ***Balanoff Good Government Award*** visit *www.TexasCPM.com.*



