

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Different ways to ensure accountability:** The fixation of accountability in public services is possible in a number of ways. Following are some of the significant ways and means to ensure accountability of public accountability:

1. **Citizen charters:** The citizen charter in public documents clearly mention the individual or agency entrusted with the provision of a particular public service.
2. **Rule of law:** Proper enforcement of laws in an equal manner for all is also a way out to ensure accountability.
3. **Performance monitoring:** Continuous and regular monitoring of performance ensures accountability of officials in the long term perspective.
4. **Provision of maintaining auditing account:** Maintaining auditing account also helps accountability. This will allow easy transformation of the office when one officer leave and other occupies it, without damaging the public exchequer and precious time.
5. **Grievance redressal mechanism:** To ensure accountability each governmental block must have grievance redressal cells to listen problems originated from the public offices. Strengthening of vigilance mechanism including appointment of Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayukta in every state public office is constituted.
6. **Public participation:** One of the major efforts to enforce to administrative accountability is to direct involvement of the people in the administrative process. People's participation may includes public involvement in decision making, community control over public funds and expenditure, consultation in planning process etc.
7. **Representative bureaucracy:** A few scholars have recommended the importance of Representative bureaucracy to ensure that administrators remain responsive to the needs of the people. They held the view that democracy will be served better if the bureaucrats mirror certain characteristics of society.
8. **Information technology:** Use of information technology should be promoted so that actual situation of public service delivery can be checked. Further, there must be availability of necessary data in public domain so as to increase transparency.
9. **Proper training:** Trainings should be conducted so as to make public servants aware about their responsibilities in changing scenario. Further good performers should be rewarded to boost their morale.

In addition to the above, a well-defined hierarchy of accountability of public servants must be defined by the authorities. Decentralisation, proper delegation and devolution are vital to accountability.

**Limitations of accountability:** The concept of accountability has the following limitations.

1. Variation in the pattern of accountability itself is the first limitation of accountability. For instance, public enterprises engage in manufacturing or commercial administrations are different from that of the administrator of typical government department.

2. Another limitation is that the concept of accountability is culture oriented. It varies with public expectation and operates within the cultural atmosphere of that political system. The nature and the degree of accountability thus defined and limited by the culture to a large extent.
3. It has been noticed that the activities of trade union like organisations also set limits to accountability to the rules and regulations followed by departments.
4. Administrative accountability is also limited in situations like which may rightly be called 'non-administration'. There are administrative systems in the world where the decisions are taken bypassing the formal administrative institutions and established procedure. Such type of administrative system is characterized by lack of administrative accountability.

**Need of public accountability:** Accountability in Public Administration is needed for the following reasons:

- (a) Accountability is a value and can be described as being concerned with holding an individual or an organization as accountable, leading to the fixation of responsibility. Accountability as a value has immense benefits both to the officials providing the public service, as well as to the people who receives of these services.
- (b) Accountability promotes greater efficiency, as well as effectiveness in public service.
- (c) Accountability helps in assigning greater loyalty and commitment to the organizational objectives, especially concerning the timeliness of service delivery.
- (d) It enhances the citizen-centric character of public services, coupled with better responsiveness. It brings transparency into the system and will boost confident and trust of public.
- (e) It promotes discipline among public servants, especially with regard to completing their assigned duties responsibly. It helps in maintaining honesty in public service, as the public servants are well aware that their actions would be subject to the accountability test.
- (f) Accountability is needed for better analysis of shortcomings in public service delivery system and can help to eradicate them easily.
- (g) Responsibility fixation becomes easier, with respect to any work or initiative. It is required for better implementation of responsibilities poured by our elected ministers and law of the land for the benefit of the public at large.
- (h) Accountability is needed to curb the malpractices like corruption due to briberies, nepotism, and lackadaisical behaviour due to non-adherence to time punctuality.

Accountability thus, is one of the cornerstones of good governance. It ensures answerability towards actions taken, blameworthiness towards dealings done for large interests; liability towards our true or false doings and thereby contributing to nation building.