

AN INTRODUCTORY PRIMER TO THE

Public Service Responsibilities in Iran





The basic function of any government is to provide public services to its citizens. Whether the issue is education, healthcare, security, water and sewage, or protecting the environment, government officials make decisions on how to allocate a country's wealth to address such services.

In a democracy, citizens are responsible for holding their government accountable for the quality of the services it provides.

They indicate what services are expected and when those services are failing. Do you have concerns regarding the services being provided to your local community? How can you and your fellow citizens make your voices heard? By outlining which government agencies are responsible for providing the various public services, and at which level (local,

provincial or national), this document is intended to provide you with the information necessary to help you hold the appropriate government officials accountable,

address service gaps and improve service policies.

Help us keep this information up to date and let us know about challenges you face in advocating for improvements in public services. If you note errors or had experiences different from what is outlined in the law, please let us know—be sure to reference

the source of your understanding. Submit information to info@nabz-iran.com.

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In Iran, both municipal and provincial governments are responsible for providing public services. The level of government at which the ultimate responsibility lies depends on the type of service in question.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

At the local level, your municipality has an Office for City Services, which is tasked with policymaking, planning, coordination, and supervision of public services provided by the municipality. Your elected municipal council is responsible for overseeing the performance of the municipal government. It is responsible for passing local codes (as long as they do not conflict with provincial and national legislation) and selecting the mayor who oversees service implementation. The councils are also tasked with increasing citizen participation in addressing public issues.

Over the years, some of these local responsibilities have been superseded by new legislation giving provincial-level officials the primary responsibility. In these cases, the municipality still can play an advisory role.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

Your governor's office and the provincial offices of various national ministries are responsible for those services not provided by your municipal government.

According to the Provincial Planning and Development Council Regulation promulgated in 2011, councils in each province have the responsibility for decision making, issuing directives, providing guidance, coordinating, and supervising provincial planning and budgetary affairs—

within the framework laid out at the national level. These councils are housed in your governor's Office of Planning and study the recommendations provided by working groups, county planning committees and other provincial

agencies. Each provincial council is made up of eight Specialist Working Groups. Their responsibilities relevant to public services include:

- Deliberating over and confirming development projects at the provincial level; and
- Signing off on development plans and prioritizing services at the city and village level, within the policy framework set by the Supreme Council for Planning and Architecture (part of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development).

Which Government Bodies are Responsible for Which Services?

Note regarding municipal organizations and departments: Because names of municipal organizations and departments may vary by municipality, check with your municipality's Public Relations Office to determine the specific titles for your location.

Perhaps you are concerned with the level of a particular public service where you live and want to see it addressed. But where do you start? Contacting your local council is a good first step. Even if the public service you are concerned with is managed at the provincial level, your local council members are responsible for providing those officials with recommendations. They also may be able to help facilitate your interactions with the provincial officials.

Did you know?

Municipal council meeting discussions are required to be public and available for broadcast and publication.

The general public and the media are free to attend council meetings, though you will need to coordinate with the council's public relations unit. Furthermore, council members are required to be available to meet with citizens to hear their problems.



EDUCATION

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

The provincial office of the Ministry of Education is the main decision making body for public education in that geographic area.

- If you have concerns over the quality of equipment and supplies in your child's school, you can contact the ministry's Office of Public Relations and Documents located in your province.
- If you have concerns over the building where your child goes to school, you can contact the provincial Office of Public Participation located in the Education Ministry's Organization for Development, Renovation, and Mobilizing Schools. This organization oversees the construction and renovation of school buildings, and encourages citizens to volunteer to help in renovations.
- School Curriculum is set at the national level through the Ministry of Education. However, discussions with provincial representatives and Members of Parliament could help convey messages to the Ministry.

LOCAL LEVEL

While your local council does not make decisions over education in your area, its Culture, Society, and Sports Commission has the mandate to identify local education needs and provide recommendations to provincial officials.



ELECTRICITY

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

The provision of electricity to homes and businesses in your area is administered at the provincial level by the Ministry of Energy. Each province has its own Provincial Electricity Company, which is a subsidiary of the Electricity Production, Transfer, and Distribution Company of Iran.

LOCAL LEVEL

Your local council's Development and Services Commission provides recommendations regarding electricity services to the Ministry of Energy.



WATER AND SEWAGE

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

Water delivery, along with sewage removal and treatment services, are administered by the Office of Water and Sewage Affairs located in the provincial branches of the Ministry of Energy.

- In each province, the Ministry oversees a Water and Sewage Treatment Company. Each company has a public relations office.
- In each province, the Ministry also oversees a Regional Water Company, which is responsible for procuring and safeguarding sources for drinking water, agriculture, and industry; repairing and maintaining dams; and producing hydroelectricity. Each company has its own public relations office.

Within the Provincial Planning and Development Council, the Infrastructure and Urban Planning Affairs Working Group is involved in policy making related to the development of water distribution systems. The working group is headed by the Governor's Deputy for Coordinating and Development, and is housed in the provincial headquarters of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

LOCAL LEVEL

Additionally, the Development and Services Commission of your local council provides recommendations to the Ministry of Energy regarding water distribution and sewage issues.



PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

LOCAL LEVEL

Your municipal government is responsible for running a Parks and Green Spaces Organization. This organization generally subcontracts outside companies for the greens keepers who maintain the spaces. For concerns regarding this service, contact your council's Development and Services Commission, which oversees and creates regulations regarding public parks and green spaces.

Citizen Engagement

In July 2013 (Tir 1392) in Ahvaz, the local branch of the Environmental Protection Organization hosted a meeting with local environmental NGOs to get their recommendations on how to educate the public on proper waste management and to listen to their concerns regarding waste management.



WASTE MANAGEMENT

LOCAL LEVEL

Waste management is the responsibility of your municipal government's Waste Management Organization. The organization hires subcontractors to:

- Clean the streets
- Collect and dispose of waste
- Bury waste
- Collect recyclable materials
- Remove construction debris

For concerns regarding waste management in your area, contact the Development and Services Commission of your local council, which is responsible for oversight and regulations regarding waste management.



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

Environmental protection services are administered at the provincial level by the Environmental Protection Organization as well as the Ministry of Agriculture.

Iran's Environmental Protection Organization (EPO), which operates out of the President's Office, has departments in each province that are responsible for:

- Preserving ecosystems
- Addressing pollution
- Assessing the environmental impact of development projects
- Educating the public

The Office of Natural Resources and Watershed Management operates out of the Ministry of Agriculture's provincial branches. Its duties are to manage and protect the national forests, prevent erosion, and conduct watershed management.

Within the Provincial Planning and Development Council, the Land Logistics, Environment, and Sustainable Development Working Group is involved in policy making with regards to moving polluted industries outside of population centers. It is also responsible for assessing the environmental impact of development projects. The working group is headed by the Governor's Deputy for Planning, and is housed in the Governor's Office for Planning and Budget.

LOCAL LEVEL

For concerns regarding environmental protection in your area, you can also contact your council's Development and Services Commission, which provides recommendations to the EPO and Ministry of Agriculture.

Citizen Engagement

In December 2011 (Azar 1390), the Karun Union Cultural Institute for the Environment, an NGO based in Ahvaz, submitted a recommendation to the local office of the Environmental Protection Organization, calling for an Ahvaz Cleanup Day. Several days later, Ahvaz held its Cleanup Day, with local citizens pitching in to remove trash from public spaces and along the roads.



URBAN DEVELOPMENT

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

Within the Provincial Development and Planning Council, the Infrastructure and Urban Planning Affairs Working Group is involved in policy making with regards to city and village layout planning as well as urban renewal and reconstruction. The working group is headed by the Governor's Deputy for Coordinating and Development, and is housed in the provincial headquarters of Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

LOCAL LEVEL

Your municipal government has an Urban Development Organization, which is responsible for road construction and maintenance as well as construction of public buildings and infrastructure. For concerns regarding urban development, including road conditions and quality, contact your council's Development and Services Commission, which conducts oversight and creates regulations regarding this issue.

Citizen Engagement

In December 2013 (Azar), citizens of Aliabad, on the outskirts of Ahvaz, attended the Ahvaz City Council meeting to demand that they receive basic public services, including the laying of asphalt on their roads.



TRANSPORTATION

LOCAL LEVEL

Your municipal government is responsible for running a Bus Transportation Organization, which directly provides the bus services. In areas where a metro system is available, the municipality oversees an Urban Railway Organization. For concerns regarding this service, contact the Development and Services Commission of your local council, which conducts oversight and creates regulations regarding public transportation.

Did you know?

Article 50 of the Islamic Republic Constitution states that: "The preservation of the environment, in which the present as well as the future generations have a right to flourishing social existence, is regarded as a public duty in the Islamic Republic. Economic and other activities that inevitably involve pollution of the environment or cause irreparable damage to it are therefore forbidden."



CULTURAL HERITAGE

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

Cultural heritage preservation issues are managed at the provincial level by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization. The organization, which is overseen by the Office of the President, has branches in each of the provinces. Its responsibilities include:

- Providing scientific and technical advising regarding preservation of cultural heritage sites and developing tourism and the traditional handicrafts industry; and
- Identifying the needs of scientific research projects and helping facilitate them.

Within the Provincial Planning and Development Council, the Infrastructure and Urban Planning Affairs Working Group is involved in policy making with regards to protecting buildings and spaces of cultural and historical value in the province. The working group is headed by the Governor's Deputy for Coordinating and Development, and is housed in the provincial headquarters of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

LOCAL LEVEL

Many municipalities have a Restoration and Rehabilitation of Old Buildings Organization, which cooperates with the Cultural Heritage Organization. Its responsibilities include:

- Identifying buildings of historical value in your area; and
- Providing recommendations on preserving cultural heritage sites

If you have concerns regarding the preservation of historical sites in your area, you can also contact the Development and Services Commission of your local council, which provides recommendations to the Cultural Heritage Organization on these issues as well.



PUBLIC SAFETY

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

The Law Enforcement Forces, which are part of the Ministry of Interior and administered at the provincial level, are responsible for maintaining security in your area. They manage your local police departments.

LOCAL LEVEL

Firefighting and emergency rescue services are the responsibility of your municipal government, which runs a Firefighting and Safety Services Organization. For concerns on these issues, you can contact your local council. The council's Development and Services Commission addresses emergency service issues. It also provides recommendations to law enforcement officials. The council's Culture, Society, and Sports Commission focuses on crime in your area and provides recommendations to security officials.

Citizen Engagement

The Torbat-e Jam County Health Network, in Khorasan-e Razavi province, coordinates with local activists to educate the public on various health issues.

In June 2012 (Tir 1391), the Health Network coordinated with activists to set up information tents in towns in order to provide informational brochures and to answer questions regarding AIDS.

In 2012 (1391), activists assisted the Health Network in preparing for the implementation of the Urban Family Physicians Plan, which is intended to improve the reach of family physicians to citizens. The Health Network held a conference and trained volunteers in how to disseminate information regarding the plan. Volunteers spread fliers and forms around the city to announce the plan and answer citizens' questions.



PUBLIC HEALTH

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

Public health is managed at the provincial level. The Ministry of Health and Medical Education oversees the country's healthcare system, provision of medicine, and runs the University of Medical Sciences system and their related public hospitals and clinics. Your province has an office of the Ministry of Health, which oversees

Citizen Engagement

In July 2010 (Tir 1389), the Tehran Province Welfare Organization held a conference for the heads of local NGOs in order to deliberate over the government's priorities and challenges in tending to the welfare of provincial citizens in need. Officials stressed the importance of NGO participation and coordination with the Welfare Organization in order to help provincial orphans, the disabled, and others in need.

your local hospitals and the branches of the University of Medical Sciences. The University of Medical Sciences administers the Healthcare Network in each city, town, and village, including public clinics and treatment centers.

Within the Provincial Planning and Development Council, the Health and Food Safety Working Group provides recommendations on this issue to the Health Ministry. The working group is headed by the Governor's Deputy for Politics and Security, and is housed in your province's University of Medical Sciences.

LOCAL LEVEL

For concerns regarding healthcare services, you can contact your council's Culture, Society, and Sports Commission, which provides recommendations to local Ministry of Health officials.



PUBLIC WELFARE

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

Public welfare in your area is managed at the provincial level. The State Welfare Organization, which is a part of the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security, is responsible for addressing social and welfare issues, including those affecting orphans, households without guardians, and the disabled. The organization is also tasked with coordinating with NGOs to help on these issues.

LOCAL LEVEL

For public welfare issues in your area, you can contact the local council's Culture, Society, and Sports Commission, which provides recommendations to the Ministry of Welfare.

Did you know?

Article 29 of the Islamic Republic constitution states that: "Every person is entitled to the enjoyment of social security. This covers retirement, unemployment, old age, being laid off, being without a guardian, casual misfortune, accidents, and occurrences giving rise to the need for health services and medical care and treatment, through insurance, etc. The Government is bound, in accordance with the laws, to use public revenues and the revenue drawn from individual contributions to provide the services and financial support mentioned above for every individual in the country."

Appendix: Freedom of Information Law (2010)

- Every Iranian has the right to access public information, unless a law has prevented it from being released.
- Public institutions and private institutions that provide public services are required to provide information to the public without discrimination.
- Public institutions must respond to a request for information in no more than 10 days following receipt of the request.
- All public institutions must, on a yearly basis, provide the public with all unclassified information, published online, regarding their activities and balance sheet (agencies that are overseen by the Supreme Leader will provide public information based on the Supreme Leader's discretion).

To the extent possible, the institution should provide a document that guides the citizen in the following:

- Objectives, duties, policies, and organizational structure.
 - Methods and steps for completion of services provided directly to the public.
 - The means by which citizens can submit complaints regarding the decisions and actions of the institution.
 - Types of information held by the institution and procedures for how to access them.
 - Authorities and duties of the institution's senior officials.
 - All the mechanisms and procedures by which individuals and NGOs can have a part in the implementation of those authorities and in other ways play an effective role.
- Public institutions are required to provide a report regarding their yearly implementation of the Freedom of Information law to the Publication and Free Access to Information Commission.



- Institutions can refuse to disclose information the disclosure of which would harm:
 - Public's safety and welfare
 - Prevention of crimes and capture of wanted criminals
 - Conducting tax audits and addressing legal complications
 - Monitoring of immigration into the country
- The Publication and Free Access to Information Commission is an organization in the executive branch and is housed in the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance. It is made up of:
 - Minister of Islamic Culture and Guidance (Chair)
 - Minister of Communications and Information Technology, or a relevant deputy
 - Minister of Intelligence, or a relevant deputy
 - Minister of Defense, or a relevant deputy
 - Head of Management and Planning Organization, or a relevant deputy
 - Head of Court of Administrative Justice
 - Head of Majlis Culture Committee
 - Head of the Supreme Council of Information Technology
- The Publication and Free Access to Information Commission is required to provide a yearly report to the Majlis and the President detailing the adherence of public institutions to the Freedom of Information Law as well as its own activities.
- The following are considered crimes, and the perpetrator could be subject to fines ranging from 300,000 to 100 million rials:
 - Preventing the release of information that the law requires to be released
 - Failing to meet the deadlines stipulated by the law



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