Corporate Customer Service Standards 2025 Edition

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Scope

The Corporate Customer Service Standard (CSS) governs all interactions between the City of Kawartha Lakes and external customers, ensuring a consistent and professional experience across all service channels. It defines the level of service customers should expect when engaging with the City, providing clarity on service delivery expectations.

This CSS establishes clear service expectations, including response times, service request handling, and communication channels, ensuring a consistent, accessible, and high-quality customer experience across all City Divisions. It provides guidance for staff, ensuring that residents, businesses, and visitors experience efficient, transparent, and professional service interactions.

1.2 Why This Update?

The 2025 revision of the CSS enhances the 2017 Corporate Customer Service Standards, ensuring it serves as a key pillar within the City's Customer Experience Strategy (CES). This update refines the scope of the CSS, clarifying its core function while shifting some elements from the 2017 version into other CES components, such as Customer Service Toolkits and Customer Conduct guidance that allow these elements to be updated in a more timely fashion should the need arise.

This revision introduces several improvements, including:

- Introduces Division Service Targets (DST) to provide service flexibility across Divisions.
- Establishes clear escalation pathways to ensure efficient resolution of customer inquiries and service requests.
- Standardizes response times to promote service consistency across all Divisions.
- Refinements based on staff feedback to ensure practical and applicable daily operations.

By strengthening these areas, the CSS ensures adaptability, responsiveness, and service excellence while maintaining alignment with the broader objectives of the CES.

1.3 Strategic Alignment

The 2025 CSS supports the City of Kawartha Lakes 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, supporting the City's mission to provide high-quality, transparent, and efficient municipal services. This standard fosters the core values of accountability, respect, and teamwork, ensuring a consistent and equitable approach to customer service across all City Divisions.

Furthermore, the CSS contributes directly to the City's guiding principle of service excellence, reinforcing service standards and operational guidelines that promote positive interactions for staff, residents, businesses, and visitors. It advances the Good Government priority by:

- Defining clear service expectations and response protocols, ensuring consistency across all service interactions.
- Utilizing data-driven performance monitoring and reporting, enabling continuous improvement through measurable insights.
- Aligning Division service delivery through the Division Service Targets (DST) to accommodate the specific needs of various municipal functions while maintaining overall service consistency.

By integrating these principles, the CSS ensures that customer service remains a cornerstone of effective municipal governance, supporting the City's commitment to continuous service enhancement and operational excellence.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 Staff Responsibilities

Every staff member in the City of Kawartha Lakes contributes to delivering exceptional customer service, ensuring high-quality municipal operations and positive community interactions. At a high level, it is recognized that:

- The CAO and Senior Management Team ensure Department-wide adherence to the CSS by providing leadership, guidance, and accountability.
- The Managers and Supervisors integrate the CSS into daily operations; ensuring employees understand and follow service expectations.
- All City employees are expected to understand and follow the CSS, ensuring a consistent approach to customer service excellence.

- The Customer Service Division oversees the CSS, supporting staff with implementation, updates, and training.

3. Corporate Service Standards and Expectations

3.1 Service Expectations

The City of Kawartha Lakes is committed to delivering clear, measurable, and consistent customer service across all Divisions. This section establishes service expectations that guide staff interactions, ensuring quality, accessibility, and efficiency in service delivery.

Staff are expected to:

- Take ownership of any customer inquiry they receive, ensuring it is directed to the correct Division if necessary and following through on the resolution process.
- Actively listen to customer concerns and provide clear, helpful responses.
- Ensure timely and accurate follow-up on outstanding inquiries.
- Summarize and confirm customer requests to prevent miscommunication.
- Escalate concerns appropriately, when further support towards a resolution is required.

If a staff member receives a request outside of their responsibility, they are responsible for:

- Connecting the customer with the correct Division or resource and ensuring that the transition is seamless.
- Following up to confirm the request has been received by the appropriate team.
- Avoiding redirecting customers without assistance, ensuring they receive a complete resolution process.

These expectations promote a seamless customer experience by ensuring staff take ownership and accountability. Staff must remain engaged with the inquiry until it is successfully transitioned or resolved.

3.2 Service Channels

The City of Kawartha Lakes offers multiple service channels to ensure accessible and efficient customer service. Whether seeking information, submitting a service request, or requiring assistance with municipal services, customers can connect with the City through various communication methods. Service channels are designed to

accommodate different needs, including in-person service during administration hours, digital tools available 24/7, and after-hours support for urgent municipal matters.

Customers can connect with the City through the following options:

Corporate Service Channels (Available During Administration Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm)

- **Telephone**: Primary customer service line: 705-324-9411 or 1-888-822-2225
- **Email**: General inquiries can be sent to inquiries@kawarthalakes.ca
- **In-Person Services**: Available at Municipal Service Centres:
  - Bobcaygeon Service Centre: 123 East St. S.
  - Coboconk Service Centre: 9 Grandy Rd.
  - Lindsay Service Centre: 26 Francis St.
  - Omemee Service Centre: 1 King St. W.

Many City Divisions provide in-person services to assist customers with service requests and inquiries. Customers can contact the primary service channels listed above for guidance on the appropriate Division to assist them.

Digital and Online Services (Accessible 24/7)

- **Website and Online Portals:** Customers can submit inquiries and service requests through www.kawarthalakes.ca/reportit
- **Social Media and Digital Engagement Platforms:** Monitored for general inquiries; however, these platforms are not official service request channels

After-Hours Municipal Emergencies (Outside of Administration Hours Only)

- After-hours municipal emergencies line: 1-877-885-7337

Emergency Services (Available 24/7)

- 911 should be used for police, fire, or paramedic services

3.3 Response Time Guidelines

Response time guidelines establish the corporate expectation for how general inquiries and service requests are acknowledged and processed by the City. These expectations apply to all corporate service channels, ensuring timely, transparent, and consistent communication with customers.

City staff are responsible for providing accurate responses while ensuring clarity and accountability throughout the inquiry and service request lifecycle. The goal is to uphold the City's service commitment by setting clear expectations for acknowledgment, response times, and resolution plans.

General Inquiries and Service Requests

The City differentiates between general inquiries and service requests to establish clear response expectations:

- **General inquiries** are requests for information that do not require any service action. These inquiries may not be formally tracked but must be acknowledged and addressed within a defined timeframe. Examples include:
  - Asking about facility hours of operation
  - Requesting information on a by-law
  - Inquiring about how to apply for a City program
- **Service requests** are customer-reported issues requiring action by the City that cannot be resolved at the first point of contact. These requests are formally tracked in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system or an appropriate Division system and follow structured workflows for resolution. Examples include:
  - Reporting a pothole
  - Requesting a missed waste collection pickup
  - Notifying the City about a streetlight outage

General Inquiries

Some inquiries may be resolved at the first point of contact, while others may require further investigation before a full response can be provided.

- **Acknowledgment:** General inquiries should be acknowledged by the appropriate staff member in the responsible division within three business days of receipt. The acknowledgment must confirm receipt, identify the Division handling the inquiry, outline the next steps, and provide contact information for follow-up. Automated system responses do not satisfy this requirement.
- **Response Timeline:** If additional investigation is required to address the inquiry, the acknowledgment must include a clear timeline or outline of the next steps.

- **Ongoing Communication:** If a full response cannot be provided within the initial timeframe, an update must be given, including the current status and a revised timeline for resolution.

Service Requests

Service requests follow structured workflows and are formally tracked to ensure accountability, follow-up, and resolution.

To ensure consistency and transparency, the City has established Division Service Targets (DST), which define standard acknowledgment and resolution timeframes for service requests. These targets are structured to reflect request complexity, operational priorities, and available resources.

4. Division Service Targets

4.1 Purpose and Scope

The DST defines standardized acknowledgment and resolution timelines for managing service requests across all Divisions. As an appendix to the CSS, it serves as a structured approach for ensuring consistency, transparency, and accountability in service request handling. The DST defines:

- **Acknowledgment Timelines**: The expected timeframe within which a service request must be acknowledged by the appropriate staff member in the responsible Division. Acknowledgment must confirm receipt, specify the responsible Division handling the service request, outline next steps, and include contact information for follow-up inquiries.
- **Resolution Timelines**: The expected timeframe for completing a service request.

By establishing clear and measurable service targets, the DST supports efficient service delivery while allowing Divisions to tailor response expectations to their specific operational realities within the framework of the City's customer service principles.

4.2 Key Functions of DST

The DST helps Divisions manage service requests efficiently while setting clear expectations for response times, tracking, and communication. Key functions include:

- **Defining Service Expectations:** Establishes acknowledgment and resolution timelines, ensuring service requests are handled within predictable timeframes.

- **Tracking and Monitoring Service Requests:** Ensures service requests are formally logged, monitored, and updated within the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system or an appropriate Division-specific system to facilitate follow-up and ensure resolution.
- **Supporting Customer Communication and Accountability:** Helps Divisions maintain timely updates and transparent communication with customers throughout the service request lifecycle.
- **Driving Performance Review and Continuous Improvement:** Supports service performance evaluation, allowing Divisions to make data-driven adjustments that enhance their service delivery and response times.

By adopting the DST, Divisions can manage service requests in a way that aligns with their unique operational realities while maintaining the City's overall commitment to service excellence, transparency, and accountability.

5. Service Request Escalation

5.1 Purpose and Overview

The Service Request Escalation Pathway outlines a clear process for managing service requests that have not been acknowledged or resolved within the established Division Service Targets (DST). This pathway ensures unresolved requests are promptly reviewed and addressed through an escalation process that promotes accountability, transparency, and timely communication with customers.

Escalations can be initiated by staff or the public when:

- A service request is not acknowledged within the prescribed DST timeframe.
- A service request is not resolved within the DST timeframe, and the customer has not received an updated resolution timeline.

This framework ensures service requests are escalated through appropriate levels of authority until they are resolved, with ongoing communication provided to the customer throughout the process.

5.2 Service Request Escalation Pathway

If a service request is not acknowledged or resolved within the prescribed DST timelines, it follows this structured escalation pathway:

Step 1: Division Head (Manager or Supervisor) – Initial Division Review

- If a service request has not been acknowledged or resolved within the DST timeframe, the Customer Service Division escalates the request to the responsible Division Head (Manager or Supervisor).
- The Division Head will:
    - Review the issue and determine necessary actions;
    - Provide a revised resolution timeline;
    - Communicate updates to the customer.
- If the service request remains unacknowledged, unresolved, or the customer has not received an update two weeks after escalation to the Division Head, the Manager of Customer Service escalates the request to the Department Head.

Step 2: Department Head (Director/Chief) – Final Division Review

- The Department Head will:
    - Conduct a formal review of the service request;
    - Provide a revised resolution timeline and ensure the customer is updated on the status of their service request.
- If the service request remains unacknowledged, unresolved, or the customer has not received an update two weeks after escalation to the Department Head, the Manager of Customer Service escalates the request to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).

Step 3: Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) – Final Corporate Review

- The CAO will review the service request and provide guidance to facilitate the resolution.
- This ensures a fair, consistent, and transparent resolution process across all Divisions.

5.3 Guidelines for Appropriate Escalation

To maintain the integrity of the escalation process, it is essential to adhere to defined escalation criteria:

- **Process Failure or Missed Service Targets:** Escalation is warranted when the prescribed DST timelines have not been met and a revised resolution plan has not been communicated to the customer.
- **Disagreement with Outcome**: Disagreement with a resolution does not constitute grounds for escalation.

By following the escalation pathway, the City ensures that service requests are managed fairly and consistently, promoting transparency, accountability, and service excellence across all Divisions.

6. Performance Monitoring

6.1 Purpose and Overview

Performance monitoring ensures the City maintains consistent service delivery standards and identifies opportunities for continuous improvement. This process focuses on collecting and analyzing data to evaluate performance against established service expectations in the CSS and DST.

6.2 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Performance will be tracked using the following measurable indicators:

- **Response Time Compliance** – Percentage of service requests acknowledged and responded to within defined timelines.
- **Customer Satisfaction** – Feedback gathered through surveys and service follow-ups to measure overall satisfaction.
- **Escalation Trends** – Analyzing escalated service requests to identify recurring issues and service gaps.
- **Service Request Completion Time** – Average time taken to complete service requests across Divisions.

These indicators will provide data-driven insights that help Divisions improve service delivery and ensure accountability.

6.3 Reporting and Oversight

Regular reporting and oversight ensure that performance monitoring remains focused, measurable, and actionable. The following reporting practices will help track progress, inform service improvements, and maintain accountability:

- **Bi-Annual Performance Reports:** Twice a year, a performance report will be submitted to the Senior Management Team and the Corporate Customer Service Standards Working Group to review service performance and identify key trends in service request handling.
- **Annual Report to City Council:** The Customer Service Division will provide an annual update to City Council, summarizing overall performance and key service trends.

- **Customer Feedback Analysis:** Customer feedback and survey results will be regularly analyzed to identify service gaps, measure satisfaction, and inform ongoing improvements.

By focusing on key performance metrics, customer feedback, and regular reporting, the City ensures that customer service remains adaptive, responsive, and aligned with evolving service expectations.

7. Training and Awareness

7.1 Purpose and Overview

Training and ongoing awareness ensure that all staff understand and uphold the CSS DST. A shared commitment to these standards is key to building a culture of service excellence across the City.

7.2 Onboarding and Staff Responsibilities

As part of the onboarding process, all new staff will receive a review of the CSS to understand their role in meeting the City's service expectations. Staff are expected to apply these standards in their daily interactions and service delivery to ensure a consistent customer experience across all Divisions.

In addition, employees will be provided with the DST specific to their Division to ensure they are equipped to meet Division-specific service targets and response expectations.

7.3 Ongoing Learning and Development

To support continuous improvement, training opportunities will be provided through the Customer Service Toolkits and other corporate resources. These sessions will offer practical tools and best practices to help staff maintain high standards of service.

By equipping staff with the right knowledge and resources, the City strengthens its commitment to service excellence, accountability, and customer satisfaction.

8. Review and Governance

8.1 Purpose and Overview

Regular review and governance ensure that the CSS and DST remain current, practical, and aligned with operational realities. This process helps identify areas for improvement and promotes continuous enhancement of service delivery.

8.2 Review Cycle

- **Annual Review**: The DST will undergo an annual review to ensure they reflect operational changes and align with the City's service commitments.
- **Comprehensive Review Every Four Years**: The CSS will undergo a comprehensive review once per Council term to evaluate its overall effectiveness and recommend updates if needed.

8.3 Role of the Corporate Customer Service Standards Working Group

The Corporate Customer Service Standards Working Group plays a key role in overseeing the implementation and continuous improvement of the CSS and DST. This group will:

- Review performance data and trends to identify areas for improvement.
- Recommend updates and enhancements to the CSS and DST based on staff and customer feedback.
- Monitor compliance and promote consistency in service delivery across Divisions.
- Provide strategic oversight and support to ensure standards evolve with organizational needs.

A structured review and governance process ensures that customer service standards remain relevant, adaptable, and effective in promoting service excellence.