

Appendix A: Research and Data

Purpose

The purpose of this appendix is to provide an overview of the research conducted and the findings informing the identification of issues related to customer service for the City of Greater Sudbury.

Employee Views of Our Customer Service Capacity

Frontline employees generally see a need for change in the corporation's customer service approach. Although this item scored ninth highest in grand driver averages in the 2016 employee survey, it accounted for the third highest decrease since 2014, with a decrease of 5.1%. It also received the least number of responses in the question of things "most in need of change" at the organizational level, with only 49 respondents identifying it as one of the two most important (1.7% of responses). However, this item received the lowest score when comparing the City of Greater Sudbury response to the municipal database of the survey service provider, Metrics@Works, with a difference score of 13%. This driver was proportionally more important to frontline employees.

The same was true in the 2014 employee survey: while customer service culture did not rank highly in terms of importance, there was a significant (11 percentage point) drop from 2012 to 2014. It also scored low in comparison with the municipal benchmarking database from Metrics@Works.

As data from the Institute for Citizen-Centred Services (ICCS) shows, the relatively low overall placement of "customer service culture" in the employee survey in the list of important issues is an indicator of a need for change. High-performing organizations place a high value on, and understand how to influence, customer service culture.

Based on feedback from employees, when an internal community engagement task force was established in 2015, it was quickly expanded to include customer service as these were seen to be intrinsically linked. Work conducted in that group identified a number of themes associated with what was perceived as an organizational gap related to customer service and community engagement. These themes were: the ability to respond quickly and consistently to issues, the availability of processes to support consistent responsiveness, the availability of appropriate training for staff on facilitation, conflict resolution, customer service, and engagement, and the need for ongoing education to citizens about what they can expect from the City.

Citizen Views of Our Customer Service Capacity

In 2016, the City conducted a citizen perception survey, which surveyed 1,200 random households for levels of satisfaction with local quality of life and opinions on municipal services.

- ◆ Half of residents that were surveyed (50%) said they had need of some kind of customer service contact with the City over the previous year.

- ◆ A large majority of the customer service contact over the previous year was via telephone – in fact, more than three-quarters of residents who contacted the City had contact by telephone (77%).
- ◆ Most residents were satisfied with the customer service they received.
- ◆ 78% of residents were either ‘very’ satisfied (47%) or ‘somewhat’ satisfied (31%).

This perception to some extent points to a need to delve more deeply into the citizen experience of the City’s customer service capacity. As an example of how other data may mitigate the findings of the Citizen Survey, the ICCS report establishes that one of the key drivers of customer satisfaction is timeliness of response: regular feedback received to the City of Greater Sudbury indicates that there is an opportunity to enhance our consistency in the delivery of accurate information.

The qualitative feedback received about the City’s performance at a general level through different mechanisms (eg, through social media, media stories, calls to staff, letters to the editor, public engagement sessions, anecdotal evidence) reflects a neutral to negative perception of the City’s capacity to deliver service. This can reasonably be considered to extend to our capacity to deliver customer service.

It is noteworthy that the City of Greater Sudbury’s only recent source of quantifiable data relating to customer service is from the 2016 Citizen Survey. This speaks to the need to undertake more routine measurement of customer service satisfaction. As part of this effort, a 2018 Citizen Survey is to be launched imminently.

311 Data and Call Centre Statistics

The City’s 311 service is one of the first points of contact with residents across the community, providing first-contact customer service on over 18,000 calls and 350 @311 emails each month. The 311 Call Centre is staffed by 7 full-time Call Centre Representatives, supplemented by 3 part-time positions, as well as an ACR Software Administrator and a Supervisor. Calls are answered by 311 staff between 8 am and 4:30 pm, with after-hours service provided by a third party contractor.

There is a significant volume of data that is available about the 311 system, including:

- ◆ Calls – volume, topic, department, number of calls after hours
- ◆ Type of call – transfer, ACR, information
- ◆ Customer experience – on-hold time, call abandonment rate, first call resolution rate
- ◆ ACR cases – resolution on time, case escalation rate, late resolution
- ◆ Call centre performance – agent active time, agent talk time.

An average of data pulled from 311 over the last year shows that the rate of “ACR cases closed on time” varies significantly from one department to the next. This is reflective of the fact that different departments have different standards for “closing” a case, as well as different definitions of what “closing” a case means. It is also worth noting that an IT issue in the ACR system impedes the City’s ability to accurately measure the Roads and Water/Wastewater “closed on time” data and the current

“closed on time” data is thought to include cases wherein no metrics are associated (that is, cases where we do not have a definition for “closed on time”).

Some data for the past 12 months from 311 is as follows:

For the Past 12 Months (March 1st 2017 - February 28th 2018)	
# of calls answered by 311	218,557 (average of 18,213/month)
% first call resolution	39%
% direct transfers by name/extension	26%
French Calls	3.80%
Heaviest Day	13-Apr 1,242 calls answered
Average Talk Time	54
% Abandoned Calls	1.78%
Active Time per day	41.96% 27.83%
Calls Answered After Threshold (20 seconds)	6.46%
Calls Abandoned After Threshold	1.08%
Top 5 Calls by Department	Solid Waste Tax Department Building Services Roads Department By-law Enforcement
# of calls received After Hours	31,320
# of ACR case created by 311	28,213
Top 5 ACR Case Types	Potholes Blue Box Request Green Cart Request Garbage Collection Plowing
Emails Received @311 (started tracking in May 2017)	4,752

Best Practice

Assessing “best practice” included a review of other municipalities and organizations that have reviewed their customer service approaches and established customer service strategies. These include: Windsor, Ajax, Barrie, Brantford, Regina, Markham, Kawartha Lakes, Oshawa, and Halton Region.

Common themes found as part of this best practice review include:

- ◆ **Consistency across channels:** organizations embarking on customer service strategies recognize the importance of ensuring a seamless experience for the customer, regardless of which channel they use to engage with the municipality (ie, website, telephone, email, in person).
- ◆ **Role clarity and staff empowerment:** organization leaders must be role models when it comes to customer service and understand and support a customer-oriented service standard. This is demonstrated in several ways, especially with training and tools for staff who deliver customer service, and by processes and a culture where staff are empowered to make decisions “in the moment” about how to provide excellent customer service.
- ◆ **Timeliness:** there is a substantive focus on standards designed to ensure that responses are provided within a reasonable timeframe and that issue resolution is timely. This is supported by a framework to guide the consistent provision of quality customer service.
- ◆ **Rigorous measurement and benchmarking:** organizations that excel at customer service measure and evaluate the customer experience within their organization. This includes regular surveys using a variety of tools such as mystery shoppers and quantitative data such as first call resolution ratios. Employees who provide exceptional customer service are recognized in a public setting and celebrated for their efforts.
- ◆ **Access:** several examples exist of municipalities enhancing the customer experience by adopting different operating hours, expanded services at some locations, and “one-stop shop” counters. This is consistent with, for example, the City of Greater Sudbury’s current approach of using Citizen Service Centres throughout the community in various municipal service buildings.

Staff also interviewed several other municipalities and conducted a site visit at Halton Region. Halton is an example of a municipality that is recognized for its customer service excellence. It has been awarded the Service Quality Measurement (SQM) Group’s annual award for the highest customer service in government, for a number of years. This recognizes government organizations based on their rate of First Call Resolution (FCR) – which is the number of calls required to resolve an issue, answer a question or receive a requested service. The data from Halton reflects a high performing call centre:

- ◆ 90% of Halton Region callers made only one call to get their matter resolved. The average top performing call centre FCR score is 84% and the average government FCR score is 76%.
- ◆ 92% of callers were satisfied overall with their call centre experience.
- ◆ 96% of customers were satisfied overall with the customer service representative who handled their call.

Citizens First Study

As noted in the full report, the ICCS is a Canadian institute established in the late 1990s to sustain and further develop efforts to improve citizen satisfaction with public sector service delivery in Canada. The *Citizens First* study is a study that has been conducted every couple of years since 1998. It establishes measures with respect to citizens’ satisfaction with and expectations of service from Canadian

government, at all levels. It notes that the five drivers of client satisfaction that represent the greatest opportunity to improve the service experience are:

- ◆ Service design
- ◆ Delivery timeliness
- ◆ Staff interaction
- ◆ Channel functionality
- ◆ Issue resolution

Twenty-one components are considered within the five drivers of satisfaction. The components were scored on a matrix that measures impact (high to low) and performance (high to low). The 21 components associated with the five drivers are below, ordered from highest to lowest in terms of their impact on overall customer satisfaction.

1	Confident future issues will be resolved	11	Staff were knowledgeable
2	Issues were easily resolved	12	I received the service I was seeking
3	Amount of time to receive the service	13	Amount of time to get access to the service
4	Amount of time to get help	14	Staff understood my needs
5	Complaints were addressed	15	Staff treated me fairly
6	Received needed information	16	Process to access to the service was easy
7	I felt good about my staff interaction	17	Staff treated me with courtesy
8	Staff made every effort to address my needs	18	Achieve needs by my preferred channel
9	Satisfied with my experience using the main method	19	Easy to access the service by my preferred method
10	The process to receive the service was easy	20	Knew where or how to find the service
		21	My personal information was protected

As can be seen, of the 21 issues, five stand out as priorities for improvement by Canadian governments. The five are related to the drivers of issue resolution and delivery timeliness.

- ◆ Confident future issues will be resolved
- ◆ Issues were easily resolved
- ◆ Amount of time to receive the service
- ◆ Amount of time to get help
- ◆ Complaints were addressed

A sixth component – “Received needed information” – also ranks in the high impact/low performance quadrant. This implies that staff are properly trained to recognize what information to share with

customers and have the ability to do so. These components provide a solid basis for identifying priority issues for the City of Greater Sudbury to consider as part of a customer service strategy.

The study also outlines the difference between service standards and service expectations – for instance:

- ◆ Most expect to wait on hold for no more than 2 minutes (with a shift toward only 1 minute in the most recent study). Demand for wait times under 1 minute has doubled since the previous study, from 16% to 33%.
- ◆ When it comes to expectations for receiving a call-back in response to a message left at a government office, there has been a significant increase in expectations of hearing back within the hour (from 24% to 36%) and the expectation to hear back within the next business day has shifted down from 23% to 14%.
- ◆ The average number of minutes Canadians are willing to search for information for a routine service on a government website is 6.5 minutes which reflects a shift toward even shorter times in the most recent study.
- ◆ The average number of web pages Canadians are willing to search is 3-5 pages. The proportion expecting to search only 1 or 2 pages has increased from 27% in the 6th Citizens First Study to 35% in this most recent report.
- ◆ Most citizens (57%) hold the view that the hours at government offices should be more flexible.