



City of Kitchener Customer Service Strategy Overview

'With an exceptional customer service focus, Kitchener is 'open' for citizens to connect 24-7.'

City of Kitchener Strategic Plan 2015-2018



Introduction

'What we do is every bit as important as how we do it. We strive to understand and appreciate the needs of those we serve. One of the most important measures of our success is how we treat other people. We walk in their shoes. We listen. And we respond.'

City of Kitchener People Plan

At the City of Kitchener, customer service isn't a department, it's an attitude. It's our brand. Service to our citizens is our reason for being and customer service has always been – and will always be – at the forefront of everything we do.

The City of Kitchener completes thousands of customer service transactions, around the clock, every single day. And, in every interaction, the quality of the experience is just as important as the services we are providing.

When our customers get in touch with the city for information, or to report an issue, they expect to get a helpful response from the first point of contact. They expect accurate and complete answers to their questions and fast, convenient and reliable service -- every time. Additionally, our customers expect to access City services across a multitude of service channels, including phone, e-mail, online, mobile services, social media and face-to-face – and receive the same seamless, consistent service each time.

We recognize that every service experience provides an opportunity to build relationships with our citizens and increase their confidence and trust in us.

Through our Customer Service Strategy and other key City initiatives, we keep our focus on trends and continuous improvement not only related to the physical services we provide, but on all of the things – big and small – that we need to do to inspire the engaged, citizen-first customer service culture it takes to be at our best for our city each day.

Our Service Philosophy

The City's customer service philosophy is focused on making it as easy as possible for citizens to connect with us to get the answers, and information they need – anytime, anywhere – while enjoying a consistent, positive service experience no matter how they reach out to us.

Through a variety of research and public opinion surveys completed by Canada's Institute for Citizen-Centred Service (ICCS) over many years, Canadians have consistently identified five top factors in their satisfaction with government services. According to that research, citizens are looking to governments to provide:

- Multi-channel (phone, email, in-person, online etc.) access to City staff and services including self-service options that are consistent across the organization
- Accurate and complete answers to their inquiries
- The ability to easily check-in on the status of their inquiry or service request
- A “no wrong-door” approach to customer service across all channels
- An easy way to complain or compliment

Since Kitchener City Council's approval of the first phase of the Customer Service Strategy in 2007, the City has aligned its customer service improvements and enhancements to these key factors in citizen/customer service, with the goals of:

- Creating easier access to municipal services for citizens
- Creating greater choice in the channels citizens can use to contact the City and request services or information
- Ensuring a more predictable level of service from the City – fewer transfers, faster response times and more complete responses.

Taking Care of Business

New research from ICCS in 2016 has also identified the key drivers of satisfaction levels for business customers of government services, including: going the extra mile, speed/timeliness of service, convenience of access to service, ease of navigation for online transactions and confidence that future transactions will be addressed. These factors will be considered as business service channels are being developed and/or enhanced.

Achieving customer service excellence consistently is work that will never be finished; we can always improve and there will be ever-evolving trends, technology, citizen needs and legislation to address. This document will be updated as required and a roadmap/implementation plan will be developed for each term of Council identifying ongoing and new work to advance our Customer Service Strategy.

Our Customer Service Vision

'We share an unwavering commitment to excellence in everything that we do. We go the extra mile. Because our work makes a difference in the lives of citizens. Every day.'

City of Kitchener People Plan

The City's long-standing corporate mission – *Proudly Providing Valued Service* – demonstrates the substantial focus that has always been given to citizen service at the City of Kitchener. Our customer service vision, approved by Council in 2013, slightly expands on the corporate mission to ensure that the customer service experience for citizens is always seamless and consistent no matter where, when or how they access our services.

Customer Service Vision

To provide a seamless customer service experience

Our Guiding Principles

Council approved four guiding principles for customer service in 2013. Developed through benchmarking our customer service capabilities against 14 industry standards, these principles underpin how we achieve progress on our vision. The principles include:

- 1. Channel Availability**
- 2. Channel Integration**
- 3. Customer Interactions**
- 4. Efficiency and Effectiveness**

Strategic actions have been identified for each of these key principles that are intended to ensure that we continue to achieve progress. The strategic actions support and are aligned with previously-approved strategies (E-Services Strategy, Customer Service Strategy) and with customer service projects identified within the City of Kitchener's 2015-2018 Business Plan.

Our Strategic Actions

1. Channel Availability

Citizens are able to easily access municipal staff and services through a variety of strong channels based on their individual preference (in-person, phone, website, email, social media, etc.) in order to request a service, follow-up on a previous service request, ask a question, or register a complaint.

- 1.1** Continue to implement the City's e-Services strategy to enhance services available through the internet for web-based and mobile customers – including the development of a customer service 'one-stop shop portal', and the introduction of more online self-service options identified as important by citizens.
- 1.2** Explore the potential for the Corporate Contact Centre to take on responsibility for customer first-call resolution for new city services and, wherever possible, leverage the CRM for tracking and monitoring interactions.
- 1.3** Collaborate with regional municipal partners to develop more opportunities for citizens to access online services from both tiers of municipal government in one place, more often.

2. Channel Integration

The City is able to integrate customer contacts across all available channels so that an inquiry or service request (regardless of what channel it comes through) can be followed-up on from where it was last left off. If the customer calls back to follow-up on an inquiry, to get a status update on a service request, or to provide additional information, the service request is readily available for review or updating, containing any new information provided by the responsible staff person or division.

- 1.1** Integrate customer inquiries across a variety of channels, improve internal processes and eliminate manual steps through the integration of the CRM with the city's enterprise systems.
- 1.2** Implement customer relationship management (CRM) for workflow management, tracking and reporting to accurately and consistently manage customer inquiries and service requests.
- 1.3** Identify a city service with high potential for improvement and pilot a service efficiency program to improve service delivery which can be replicated across other City services in the future.

3. Customer Interactions

Customers find it easy to interact with the City, access their municipal services and they receive the same consistent, seamless service no matter how they reach out. They are satisfied with their first point of contact with the City as a result of a streamlined and standardized process; knowledgeable and well supported staff, and documented service levels that provide them with certainty around response times (to inquiries for information or service requests).

- 1.1** Conduct an organizational customer service review to define the landscape of service practices and standards and determine and implement the required tools, processes and templates that will ensure consistent, seamless service to citizens, across all City services.
- 1.2** Ensure a formalized escalation process is in place and provide it customers with an easy way to complain or compliment the city on customer service.
- 1.3** Develop and implement an annual communications plan focused on public awareness of channels and access points and new customer service initiatives that make it easier for citizens to connect with us 24-7.

4. Efficiency and Effectiveness

The City takes a corporate-wide approach to customer service performance (monitoring, measuring and reporting) and utilizes data from across the organization to identify areas for potential improvement and to help ensure services are being delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible.

- 1.1** Use metrics and analysis of CRM data to initiate proactive customer service improvements and enhancements that will benefit citizens or the organization.
- 1.2** Develop and implement a City of Kitchener corporate-wide training program for all front-line employees to develop customer service skills and build awareness of the City of Kitchener customer service standards, vision, philosophy, tools, templates and resources.
- 1.3** Adopt a citizen-first customer service mindset across the organization, that includes both staff engagement and change management, and focuses on aligning staff behind the city's customer service vision and developing the city's 'customer care brand.'

Business Plan Objectives

Background

Phase 3 of the Corporate Customer Service Strategy represents a substantial body of work to be completed by the end of 2017. Additionally, a second business plan project – Citizen First Customer Service Culture – has been added to be started in 2017, with its accompanying initiatives to be completed by 2019.

All initiatives that are listed in the following implementation plan tie back to one of the two business plan projects, or they represent the next logical steps for customer service work and will be listed as business plan projects in future years. One project is a joint service initiative with the City of Waterloo.

1) Customer Service Strategy Phase 3 – *Scheduled completion: End of 2017*

Focus on continuing to positively enhance the customer service experience through creating more convenient channels for customer access, improved tracking, monitoring, measuring and reporting of customer interactions and development of a standardized escalation process. The scope will also include the acquisition and implementation of new Customer Relationship management software, including staff training on the tool and customization of its business intelligence/reporting function for business lines currently using CRM.

2) Citizen-First Customer Service Culture – *Scheduled completion: end of 2019*

Focus on building a citizen-first culture through the development of several foundational elements beginning with a comprehensive organizational review looking at customer service practices, protocols and philosophies to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement. Review to be followed by the development of tools, resources, revised service guidelines and customized customer service training to support staff and further embed our customer service culture.

A third ‘ongoing’ project has been added to the business plan related to the development of the online customer service portal. While its development will occur over time as more lines of business come online, it has been listed so that progress can be reported to Council annually at this time.

Please note: Two initiatives will be ongoing in all years – the development of an annual communications plan for customer service initiatives and public awareness, and the continued implementation of the separate, council-approved E-Services Strategy.

Our Direction

The business plan projects identify two distinct streams of work for the Customer Service Strategy – one related largely to technology which will focus on the continued implementation of the CRM and building a one-stop online portal for citizens, and another stream related to further embedding customer service in our organizational culture.

From 2016 to 2018, much of the work done within both of those streams will be foundational – setting the stage for larger developments in both areas in the coming years. The purpose for this work and next steps (2016-18) both streams includes:

| Technology/Implementation of CRM 2016-2018 | Building a Citizen-First Culture 2016-2018 |
|---|---|
| <p><u>Purpose of this work:</u> To develop a comprehensive, integrated CRM that tracks work-flow and service interactions across a wide range of City services and channels, and an accompanying CRM-powered online portal that gives citizens more self-serve options.</p> <p>Work includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customization of business intelligence/reporting capabilities • Prepare current CRM customers for online presence • Review of current online landscape & development of vision and strategy/roadmap to desired outcomes. • Identify/prioritize other customers to be served by CRM • Develop online portal | <p><u>Purpose of this work:</u> To foster engaged City staff who understand their role in customer service, are aligned behind the City’s customer service vision and brand, and have the training and tools to offer quality, consistent, seamless service experiences to citizens with every interaction.</p> <p>Work includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct corporate-wide review of customer service practices, philosophies, gaps & opportunities. • Develop standardized escalation processes, revised service guidelines, tolls, templates and resources to be used across the organization. • Development and implement customized City of Kitchener training |

Both streams of work align with the guiding principles of our customer service strategy and also have an intersection with one another. This work not only creates more and better-integrated channels for citizens to receive their services, but it also fosters the development of engaged, well-trained employees who are committed to providing a consistent and seamless service experience no matter what channel citizens come through.

Other Key Considerations

The implementation plan on the following pages is aligned with both our guiding principles and strategic actions. It represents what staff currently knows is required to complete business plan objectives and continue to make progress on our customer service promise.

Additionally, staff is aware of new work that will be required – the extent of which is not fully known – that will impact how the City delivers customer service to our citizens in the coming years. Proceeding on any of these initiatives will have a substantial impact on current resources and plans for customer services initiatives, requiring current priorities and resources to be reassessed.

Further Integration of Technology

The City's new Customer Relationship Management software is the critical piece of technology that will enable us to efficiently and effectively deliver services to citizens. While unseen by the public, this powerful system supports channel consistency and channel integration – driving a consistent customer experience no matter how citizens reach out to us – and it creates a single source of managing, monitoring and tracking every customer interaction.

While staff are only in the initial phase of CRM implementation, the need to further integrate this technology with existing programs and channels – through the implementation of additional CRM modules and system integrations – will require substantial resources in the coming years. Key projects stemming from the initial CRM implementation – like the initial development of an online customer service portal – are included in this implementation plan with only approximate timing. The development of the portal and the full integration of applicable City services represent years of work. As more information is known, future projects will be identified for completion within future City of Kitchener business plans.

Pending Legislation

One of the greatest future impacts on the City of Kitchener's work within customer service may be related to addressing pending legislation from the Province of Ontario related to the concept of community service hubs being developed within complete communities. Community service hubs, as described by the Province, are intended to bring citizen access to municipal, provincial and federal services into 'one-stop shops' located within neighbourhoods.

Though no timing is currently set, the Province has included specific language about these “public service facilities’ in its current Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Staff will monitor this issue, and its potential resource requirements and include this work on a future business plan, if directed, when more details about expectations, timing and resources are known.

Joint Services Committee

The Joint Services Committee for the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo has examined options for future shared services work between the two cities. One of the initiatives for discussion is the potential to expand Kitchener’s Corporate Contact Centre to provide more service to the City of Waterloo. Currently, the City of Kitchener provides some after-hours emergency dispatch service to Waterloo. For 2016-17 an initiative to scope the potential to assist with coverage for Waterloo’s Bylaw Division has been approved by the K-W Joint Services Committee. Discussions will begin in the fall of 2016.

There may be future potential to expand the scope of the contact centre to provide other future support for the City of Waterloo. It should be noted that to both investigate and implement such an initiative would represent a substantial commitment of staff time and resources that would impact the support for other customer service initiatives in Kitchener.

Regional E-Services Collaboration

The City of Kitchener currently leads an E-Services Collaboration Committee that includes the Region, Waterloo, Cambridge and the Townships. Focused on creating efficiencies and streamlined service between municipal governments where they relate to e-service offerings, the committee is likely to generate additional customer service initiatives requiring staff time and resources.

Welcome Centre Audit, 2016

The City’s Welcome Centre is undergoing an internal audit that is expected to include recommendations for some changes that will need to be addressed. When known, that work will be added to the implementation plan.