

SERVICE EXCELLENCE



2014

 **Oxford County**
growing stronger...together

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Chief Administrative Officer
Oxford County

Customer service has been an area of focus—and pride-- for the County for many years. The “Service Excellence” strategy, a product of our Strategic Plan, is the next evolution of this focus. It represents a shift in thinking that takes us from viewing customer service as a department to a culture in which regard for our citizens and each other is ingrained in everything we do.

The principles contained in this strategy are not necessarily new for employees, and we recognize that many of you are already adhering to them in your everyday work. In “rebranding” our common vision, which is articulated in the existing customer service mission statement, we are also laying out specific actions and objectives that define excellent service.

The Service Excellence strategy charts a new course that we hope to see employees learn and grow from, together. We want to hear success stories along the way! We’re confident that employees can embrace our new Service Excellence standards as a philosophy that brings satisfaction to their work and to the clients they serve.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oxford County's Strategic Plan represents a roadmap for the organization and communicates its Vision, Mission, and Values. The plan guides Oxford County Administration by identifying strategic priorities and unites employees in working together to achieve desired outcomes.

“The level of service we provide to one another internally has a direct impact on the end service provided to our citizens.”

One of the County's six corporate strategic priorities is **A County that Performs and Delivers Results**. One focus of this priority is providing excellent service to citizens:

5. i. **A County that Performs and Delivers Results:** Enhance our customer service focus and responsiveness to our municipal partners and the public by:
- *Implementing clearly defined customer service standards and expectations*
 - *Regularly monitoring and reporting customer service performance*



The Service Excellence Strategy will help us achieve this strategic priority through:

- Establishing and continually reinforcing a culture of service excellence
- Establishing a process for citizen feedback and updating current feedback mechanisms
- Increasing the number of citizen feedback responses both internally and externally

As an organization that provides services to many different types of people, the County relies heavily on the support and assistance of co-workers and internal support services. Interactions with co-workers are also considered service situations and the level of service we provide to one another internally has a direct impact on the end service provided to our citizens.

ABOUT THE SERVICE EXCELLENCE STRATEGY

5.

The Service Excellence Strategy is a framework that guides how we respond to citizens' needs. The overall objectives of the strategy are to:

- Create and reinforce a culture of internal and external service excellence
- Establish the vision and values that govern how we deliver service to our citizens
- Respond to citizens' expectations through the development of service standards and performance measurements
- Set out a plan for implementing and maintaining activities that improve service levels

These objectives reflect a mission statement specific to the County's Service Excellence Strategy.



Oxford County Service Excellence mission statement

Committed to providing exceptional service to meet the needs of residents, stakeholders and employees of the County and area municipalities in a timely, knowledgeable, courteous and fair manner.

In the summer of 2013, nearly 400 employees took part in town hall sessions. At these sessions, employees were given the opportunity to volunteer for five "Vision to Action" (V2A) project teams. The Senior Management Team then selected team members with the purpose of evolving the activities and issues outlined in the Strategic Plan. Strategic Objective 5.1: *A County that Performs and Delivers Results* identifies the need to enhance the County's customer service focus and responsiveness to its municipal partners and the public.

The V2A: *Customer Service* team met to evaluate the current culture of internal and external service among employees, stakeholders, the public, and community partners. The team was able to refresh and build on the extensive work of the former Customer Service Improvement Team, which accomplished a great deal between 2003 and 2011, such as customer service guidelines and feedback mechanisms.

Developing the strategy

The V2A: *Customer Service* team reviewed the service strategies and practices of many other municipalities. It also reviewed research conducted by *The Institute for Citizen-Centred Service*,* which identified five drivers of customer satisfaction:

1. Timeliness
2. Staff (knowledgeable, courteous, fair, "go the extra mile")
3. Positive outcome ("I got what I needed")
4. Ease of access
5. Citizens' recent experience with services



ABOUT THE SERVICE EXCELLENCE STRATEGY

6.

It was decided that in order to provide excellent service, the County needed to research best practices, identify what quality service means to our employees and citizens, adopt a culture of service excellence and, ultimately, inspire an organizational change in the way we provide service and do business with the public and our community partners.

It was decided that in order to develop the most positive service experience possible, we had to introduce a culture of service excellence first, and then refresh our external feedback mechanisms, second.

* <http://www.iccs-isac.org/research/citizens-first/citizens-first-5/>

OVERVIEW OF KEY ACTIONS

As a result of the research conducted and the analysis of our current service practices, the V2A: *Customer Service* team recommends the following focus areas and subsequent key actions to advance the service experienced by our citizens, which will ultimately lead to increased confidence in our local government.

1. A Culture of Service Excellence

Create a culture of internal and external service excellence, where employees respect and value each other and our citizens, through teamwork, communication, and recognition.

Key Action	Timeframe	
	Short term (within next 6 months)	Long term (6 months +)
Staff engagement – “What does service excellence mean to you?”	X	
In conjunction with the Customer Service division, plan activities for Customer Service Week in October to kick off initiatives	X	
Provide employees the opportunity to learn and develop customer service skills through initiatives such as a motivational speaker and the FISH philosophy	X	X
Development of a service excellence recognition award(s) to recognize outstanding internal or external service	X	
An internal service commitment statement/infographic that outlines what we can expect from one another	X	
Adopt “service excellence” as a core competency for all employees and include as part of the recruitment and hiring processes	X	
Reinforce expectations around service excellence through the performance management process		X

How will we measure progress?

- Employee engagement survey results regarding internal service levels (have baseline data from first survey)
- Participation in and feedback on customer service events and activities
- Citizen feedback

OVERVIEW OF KEY ACTIONS

2. Service Delivery

Create a corporate commitment to timely, knowledgeable, courteous, and fair service.

Key Action	Timeframe	
	Short term (within next 6 months)	Long term (6 months +)
Develop a concise "service excellence" definition and standards document roll out to staff across the County (Appendix A)	X	
Refresh current communication guidelines (new title: Service Excellence Standards) and roll out to staff across the County (Appendix B)	X	
Create a searchable online directory with contact information for all staff with phone and e-mail access		X

How will we measure progress?

- Citizen feedback

3. Service Feedback

Establish a process for service feedback and update current feedback mechanisms

Key Action	Timeframe	
	Short term (within next 6 months)	Long term (6 months +)
Create a centralized area on the County website--"How did we do?" -- and promote through planned communication, e.g. news release, social media, etc.	X	
Develop a re-dress process to manage and track citizen complaints to ensure feedback is dealt with appropriately and tracked to ensure completion	X	
Develop a process to gather citizen contact information to be used for future feedback requests	X	
Explore a partnership with Western University Masters of Public Administration Program to facilitate a citizen service survey for Oxford County. The survey design and delivery would be part of a student's Masters Research Project pending approval from the Program Director		X
Once project is complete (above), re-evaluate feedback mechanisms and re-dress process and adjust as necessary		X

How will we measure progress?

- Citizen feedback

SERVICE EXCELLENCE STANDARDS



The County of Oxford delivers services that are focused on you, a valued citizen in our community. Our staff is committed to providing excellent service to meet your needs. We commit to meeting the following standards in each and every interaction, and appreciate your feedback on how we did today.

Service excellence is a priority at Oxford County

We will ...

- Listen attentively
- Treat you with respect
- Be courteous, knowledgeable and fair
- Respond in a timely and efficient manner
- Encourage you to provide feedback
- Ensure accessible services for all citizens
- Respect your privacy and confidentiality
- Provide accurate, reliable and high quality information
- Follow through to ensure your needs have been met in a satisfactory manner

Questions or feedback? customerservice@oxfordcounty.ca

Service Excellence Standards

Our Service Excellence Standards are our promise to our citizens and internal contacts on what can be expected when interacting with the County of Oxford and with each other. The County is committed to providing a high level of service to all of its citizens, visitors, community partners, and to one another.

All County employees, regardless of what department they work in or what their duties are, are to provide service to the public. Interactions with co-workers (internal customers) are also customer service situations.

Employees are reminded that the County image is often developed through all interactions with citizens, community partners, other levels of government, and the general public. To help facilitate a seamless approach to service within County operations, the following standards have been established for the various points of contact both internally between departments, and externally with our citizens.

The following standards are the expected minimum level of service in all County operations:

1. Telephone standards

- Phone calls will be returned by the end of the next business day. If a full response is not possible, the citizen/internal customer will be provided with a timeline for a full response.
- If an employee is out of the office and unable to return calls the next business day, an out-of-office voice mail greeting must be recorded to explain when the employee will return calls, or who can field urgent or emergency calls.
- All voice mails will be updated when away from your phone for one day or more.

Sample telephone greeting

Name, title, County of Oxford, how may I help you?

Sample voice mail greetings

Daily/weekly greeting

Hello, you have reached the voice mail for, name, title, County of Oxford. I am currently on the phone or away from my desk. Please leave a detailed message and I will return your call as soon as possible. If you require immediate assistance, please press zero to be re-directed to name, title.

Absence greeting (in meetings)

Hello, you have reached the voice mail for, name, title, County of Oxford, on date. I am currently in meetings, I will be checking my voice mail throughout the day. Please leave a detailed message, and I will return your call as soon as possible. If you require immediate assistance, please press zero to be re-directed to name, title.

Absence greeting (vacation/conferences)

Hello, you have reached the voice mail for, name, title, County of Oxford, on date. I am out of the office from date to date. Please leave a detailed message and I will return your call on date when I return. If you require immediate assistance, please press zero to be re-directed to name, title.

2. E-mail standards

- E-mails will be acknowledged by the end of the next business day. If a full response is not possible, the citizen/internal contact will be provided with a timeline for a full response.
- If an employee expects to be out of the office for one or more business day(s), the "out of office" notification is to be set up on his or her individual e-mail system including information as to an alternate contact. If the employee is checking e-mail remotely, it is not necessary to set the "out of office" notification.
- E-mail will include an electronic signature using Arial 11 point font. The full e-mail signature should include the following:
 - Name
 - Position and department
 - Contact information, such as telephone number (local and long distance), fax number, e-mail address, and mobile (if applicable)
 - Link to the Oxford County website
 - Confidentiality statement
 - Environmental commitment statement

Abbreviated e-mail signatures may be used to forward and reply to e-mail.

Employees are not to use any type of background template for their e-mail. E-mail should be the standard white and graphic free background.

Sample e-mail signature:

JOHN SMITH

Manager, Woodingford Lodge

519.539.9800, ext 1111 | 1.800.111.1111 | mobile 519.111.1111

www.oxfordcounty.ca

This e-mail communication is CONFIDENTIAL AND LEGALLY PRIVILEGED. If you are not the intended recipient, use or disclosure of the contents or attachment(s) is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify the author by return e-mail and delete this message and any copy of it immediately. Thank you.

Think about our environment. Print only if necessary.



3. **In-person standards**

- These standards apply to the front counter areas in all facilities. Because these sites are a first point of contact with external and internal customers, it is important that staff be available to provide assistance on a regular basis.
- Staff is available during core business hours (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) and/or any other operating hours as determined by the County/department.
- Hours of operation will be displayed to the public.
- Notice to the public of any changes to hours of operation will be displayed a minimum of 5 business days in advance of the change.
- Staff should acknowledge the presence of customers waiting to be served to let them know they will be assisted as soon as possible. In instances where staff is responsible for handling both walk-in customers and responding to the telephone, walk-in customers should be responded to directly, with responses to telephone inquires occurring as soon as possible afterward.

4. **Written correspondence standards**

- A response to written correspondence is provided within five (5) business days unless otherwise required by law or other reason.
- If a response to written correspondence cannot be completed within five (5) business days, an acknowledgment is provided within two (2) business days by email, voice mail/telephone or mail including the expected time for a full response.
- Written correspondence that has to be dealt with by another department will be directed accordingly within two (2) business days.
- All written correspondence should adhere to the standards in the Visual Identity Policy, using appropriate approved letterhead formats.
- If an individual is away from work, responsibility to review and manage incoming mail will be re-assigned.

