

Customer Service Standards



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Corporate Services	June 21, 2023	65-2023	1	15
Subsection	Repeals By-Law Number		Policy Number	
Customer Service	126-2012		AF-10-09	

Policy Statement

The City of Kenora is committed to policies that reflect accountability through focus on a high level of customer service. The central means to achieving service excellence is through timely, accurate, professional, competent, courteous and consistent responses to inquiries received by the City, while ensuring that all interactions are conducted with integrity.

Purpose

The purpose of the Customer Service Standards Policy is to provide clearly defined standards for the communication of information to all customers by City employees and to ensure a consistent standard practice that reflects the City's commitment to customer service.

The aim is for all employees to assist customers in a timely, accurate, professional, competent, courteous and consistent manner.

Scope

This policy applies to all City employees with respect to the delivery of customer service.

Definitions

"Customer" means a community member, resident, third party or any individual contacting any City department requesting service or information from the City. It is recognized that a City employee may also be a "Customer" and that the City has both internal and external customers.

"Council" means the Council for the Corporation of the City of Kenora.

"Employee" includes full-time, part-time, seasonal, student, casual, temporary and contract workers whose job includes communicating with members of the public.

"City" means the Corporation of the City of Kenora.

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"Complaint" is any expression of dissatisfaction about the action or lack of action taken regarding operations, facilities or services provided by the City of Kenora or by a person or body acting on behalf of the City of Kenora. The term "dissatisfaction" is key to the definition of a complaint. Feedback of a positive or general nature, comments on a service or facility that do not require a response, or requests for service, are not complaints. Complaints imply that the complainant is unhappy with the service received and that they require a follow-up response regarding the issue.

"Compliment" an expression of appreciation for satisfactory or above-satisfactory service.

"Service Request" is a request for a specific service provided by the City of Kenora. See the list online at kenora.ca.

"City Facility" includes any facility owned by the City that is available for receiving customers or hosting meetings.

General

This Policy shall be adhered to by all departments and all employees and shall be referred to as the 'Customer Service Standards Policy'.

The City will ensure that customers are provided with a variety of appropriate feedback mechanisms, and have the ability to contact the City of Kenora regarding any concerns. The City takes customer feedback seriously, and will work to address comments, suggestions and concerns.

The Customer Service Standards Policy shall be reviewed annually.

Intent

To reduce calls and inquiries from being "bounced around" internally.

To provide consistent customer service at all levels within the City and focus on the key drivers of customer satisfaction to:

- ✓ Respond and acknowledge receipt of customer contact within a reasonable time frame
- ✓ Provide accurate information and/or the avenue for the customer to receive it
- ✓ Provide fair and consistent treatment
- ✓ Be polite and respectful
- ✓ Provide a response and ensure completeness of service or request

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These guidelines set minimum standards to communicate with customers efficiently and respectfully.

Authority

The authority for the Customer Service Standards Policy shall be by the approval of the Council of the City of Kenora. Council's role in the policy is to establish the expectations and guidelines through policy approval, however it does not have jurisdiction over staff. That is the overall responsibility of the CAO. Council has one employee and that is the CAO.

Procedures for the Customer Service Standards Policy

It is important for all employees of the City of Kenora to provide timely, accurate, professional, competent, courteous and consistent customer service to all users of City of Kenora services.

There are eight main areas of customer service for employees to consider when providing customer service;

1. Timeliness,
2. Accuracy,
3. Professionalism,
4. Staff knowledge and competence,
5. Courtesy,
6. Consistency,
7. Integrity,
8. Confidentiality.

Customer inquiries are to be addressed in a prompt, professional manner. Employees are to take ownership of a problem so that it can be resolved efficiently. Where possible the employee should take down the pertinent details of the enquiry and either research and answer or forward to the appropriate department.

If the customer requires the attention of another department, the employee should direct the customer to the appropriate employee or provide the specific name and contact information of the employee who can address their concerns. Regardless of who is speaking with the customer, all customers should have a clear understanding of who will be handling their enquiry. It is good practice for the employee who received the original customer contact to follow up with the department the customer was referred to in order to ensure that the customer was taken care of and their inquiry or concern has been addressed.

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Employees are encouraged where feasible and reasonable, to look for ways to exceed customers' expectations and to enhance the delivery of service and the perception of the City. Employees are encouraged to identify service gaps and address them or bring them to the attention of their supervisor.

All interactions with customers regarding City business are deemed to be confidential in nature. Customer information, inquiries, transactions, interactions, discussions, even general in nature, are not to be shared and should be treated with confidentiality. Inter-department information that directly pertains to the customer or is required for that department to assist a customer may be shared in a confidential manner.

Communication Standards

The communication standards provide guidelines for quality delivery of services through the following customer communication channels:

- ✓ Telephone
- ✓ Email / Correspondence
- ✓ In Person

A. Telephone

Telephone Standards

Telephone calls are an important method of communication between customers, employees and third parties.

Telephone Response Time

Customer calls are returned as soon as possible when they are received. As a general rule, telephone calls will be returned within two (2) business days, with, at a minimum, an acknowledgement of the call. For shift work employees, such as Fire and Emergency Services, or irregular hour operations such as The Muse, telephone calls are returned as soon as possible when they are received upon the employees return to work. As a general rule, telephone calls will be returned within two (2) business days of the employee's return to work, with a minimum, and acknowledgement of the call.

The staff's response, within two business days, may not provide a complete resolution, but will be an acknowledgement that the message has been received. Staff should also provide an indication of any further action that will be taken to resolve the issue.

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Receiving Calls

When answering an external phone call, a consistent greeting should be used, always including a greeting and first name, and as appropriate, an applicable office and/or an offer of assistance.

Example #1: "Good afternoon, Mayor's office, Mary speaking. How may I help you?"

Example #2 "Good morning, Planning Department, Mary speaking."

When answering an internal call, a greeting and first name is sufficient.

Example #1 "Good afternoon, Mary speaking."

At the end of a call, staff members are encouraged to include three elements: summarize, set expectations and a thank you.

Example #1 "To summarize, once you submit the completed permit, we will review it and provide feedback within 10 days. Thanks for calling and if you have any further questions, please contact me at extension 1234."

Placing a Customer on Hold

If you need to place a customer on hold, ask permission to ensure they have time to wait. If they are not able to wait, provide an alternative solution on how you will contact them. After placing the customer on hold, check back periodically. Thank them for holding.

Transfers

Customers may need to be transferred between employees. Prior to transferring a call, employees are to state that the call is going to be transferred, identify who the call is being transferred to and state their telephone extension. Employees should strive to transfer calls to the correct staff representative and limit the number of times the call is transferred to different employees or take the customer's contact information and have the correct staff member return their call if the customer does not want to be transferred.

Voicemail Procedures

Voicemail is used to collect messages when an employee is absent or temporarily away from the telephone. Voicemail greetings are to provide accurate information for the caller and are to be kept current.

Sample Voice Message Responses

- In Office
- Out of Office

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- Specific Working Hours
- Part Time Staff
- Spare Phones
- General Mailbox Line

If an employee is away from the telephone for a period of more than one (1) day, the voicemail greeting will identify an alternate contact. The voicemail greeting will also identify a date by which any messages left on the voicemail will be returned by. See Appendices A for sample wording for an "out of office" voicemail greeting. For shift work employees their voicemail should identify an alternate contact and a return date to their regular shift. The 48 hours to respond would begin upon their return to their regular shift.

The voicemail message can also be modified to indicate that the individual is committed to meetings for the day, or applicable period, and not available for calls until a certain time. See Appendices A for sample wording for an "unavailable for meetings" voicemail greeting.

Corporate Cell Phones

Corporate cell phones users will follow the same general telephone guidelines as established for internal corporate phones.

Leaving a Voicemail Message on a Customer's Phone

When you leave a voice message for a customer, it is important to leave a call back number. Most callers have a call display and often call Customer Service asking who called from the City of Kenora. Leaving details for the customer will eliminate confusion about who to contact in the City.

Guidelines:

- Speak slowly and clearly, and keep the message as brief as possible
- Leave your name, position/division
- Indicate that you are calling from the City of Kenora and leave a phone number for call back
- Indicate the reason for your call
- Indicate the time and date of your call

B. Written Correspondence

Written correspondence is a formal method of communication between customers, employees and third parties. When choosing to correspond in writing (including letters and faxes), employees should ensure that it is done with accuracy and professionalism. Written

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correspondence should be done on corporate letterhead. Employees must ensure they allow themselves time to proof written correspondence prior to it being sent and have their supervisor or manager review the written correspondence if it falls outside a standard response.

Incoming written correspondence is to be stamped "Received" with a date stamp on the day that it is received by the City. Written correspondence that has been received primarily for information purposes and does not require a response may be filed in the corresponding file or with Central Records as appropriate.

All correspondence should be written and formatted in accordance with accessibility standards and regulations to ensure accessible content for users. Written correspondence that requires a response is to be acknowledged, together with a response indicating appropriate action, if possible, through a method at the discretion of the recipient within five (5) business days of the receipt of the letter, unless otherwise stated in other municipal by-laws, policies, processes or other legislation including Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and the Planning Act.

If more time or information is required for the employee to deliver an appropriate response, an explanation should be provided to the original author in the acknowledgment as to when an official response should be expected. An official response should be provided within fifteen (15) business days unless there is either a requirement to submit the matter to Council for a decision through a staff report or other exceptional circumstances. If an official response cannot be provided within fifteen days (15), the initial acknowledgement correspondence should advise the sender of the process being followed, and the anticipated timelines for an official response to be sent. If this information was not provided in the initial acknowledgement, a follow up correspondence should be sent providing it. In the situation wherein a formal decision of Council is required, an official response shall be sent within three (3) days of that Council decision.

The official response should ensure that the individual or entity is thanked for bringing this matter to the attention of the City, as applicable. All correspondence should include staff contact information for the customer to contact you directly.

If an employee is out of the office for more than one (1) day, an alternate person should be designated to respond to articles of correspondence that require immediate attention or that need to be placed on the next Council or Committee agenda.

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C. In-Person Greeting

The Municipal Office is open and ready to serve the public during the following business hours:

Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Closed on statutory holidays

A member of our staff will be available at the front to greet and assist customers. Should staff be required to attend to the telephone and counter enquiries simultaneously, counter enquiries shall take priority with telephone enquiries attended to as soon as possible afterward. Callers have the option to leave voice messages, which should be returned promptly after the customer at the counter has departed.

An in-person greeting is to be used by employees to welcome customers to the City and enquire how the employee may assist them. The customer should be acknowledged politely and professionally upon their arrival. The appropriate service, direction or information should then be provided in a timely and courteous manner.

We ask that customers who require a consultation with specific staff members or departments book an appointment in advance to ensure staff are available and equipped to serve the needs of the customer. Staff contact information is available on our website <https://www.kenora.ca/Modules/contact/search.aspx?s=5IA5H0UZuzW4jKx5LfEOYEQrggeQuAleQuAl> in addition, business cards can be made available at the Municipal Office.

D. Email Standards

Emails are a means of quick communication between customers, employees and third parties. When composing emails (including response emails), employees should ensure that they are written in a manner that promotes professionalism and accuracy. All external emails should include a proper greeting, signature line and contact information.

An email that requires a response is to be acknowledged, via email, within two (2) business days of the receipt of the original email, unless otherwise stated in other municipal by-laws, policies, processes or other legislation including Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and the Planning Act. In the event that the out of office is activated, applicable response timelines will be as stated below.

In the event that more time or information is required for the employee to deliver an appropriate response, an explanation should be provided to the original author in the acknowledgment as to when an official response should be expected. An official response

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should be provided within fifteen (15) business days unless there is either a requirement to submit the matter to Council for a decision by a staff report or other exceptional circumstances. If an official response cannot be provided within fifteen days (15), the initial acknowledgement correspondence should advise the sender of the process being followed, and the anticipated timelines for an official response to be sent. If this information was not provided in the initial acknowledgement, a follow up email should be sent providing it. In a situation wherein a formal decision of Council is required, an official response shall be sent within three (3) days of that Council decision.

If an employee is out of the office for more than one (1) business day, the 'out of office' notification is to be activated. The message within the 'out of office' notice will advise whether the individual is monitoring their emails and on what basis (i.e., regular, occasional). If the email is not being monitored on a regular basis, the out of office message will identify an alternate contact if the matter is urgent. It is the responsibility of the employee to inform their alternate contact if they are expected to be away for this period. See Appendices B for suggested wording for this type of out of office email response. Shift work employees shall always include an out of office on their email which indicates a return date to their regular shift.

A standard email signature is required by all Municipal staff for emails and should include the following information:

[Your Name]
[Position Title]
[Department]
[City of Kenora]
[Address]
[Phone and Ext. Number]
[Fax Number]
[Email Address]
[Website www.kenora.ca]
The City of Kenora [LOGO]

Disclaimer (See Below) Standard Response
Time for Emails (2 Business Days)

The following confidentiality disclaimer will be included automatically with external emails:

This message, including any attachments, is privileged and intended only for the addressee(s) named above. If you are not the intended recipient, you must not read, use or disseminate the information contained in this e-mail. If you have received this

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e-mail in error, please notify the sender immediately by telephone, fax, or e-mail and shred this confidential e-mail, including any attachments, without making a copy. Access to this e-mail by anyone else is unauthorized.

E. Meeting Requests

Internal Meeting Requests

Internal meetings are meetings organized by employees but may include other employees, customers and third parties and occur within municipal facilities or a temporary rented location. Employees are responsible for pre-booking meeting rooms and specific equipment required for the meeting. Where possible, an electronic meeting invitation will be sent to all attendees to confirm or decline attendance at the organized meeting.

In situations where the City's IT Department is required to set up equipment, such as a projector, laptop or conference phone, a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours advance notice should be given to the IT department before the meeting. Preferably, this notice should be given at the time the meeting is arranged. The room should be made available for set up a minimum of one half hour prior to the start of the meeting.

External Meeting Requests

External meetings are meetings organized by external parties and are not hosted by the City. The recipient of the meeting request will verify the availability of the invitee and respond by the R.S.V.P. date noted within the received invitation. When employees are representing the City at various meetings outside of the organization, employees are expected to represent the City in a positive, respectful manner and provide the same levels of customer service as they would when they are performing their regular duties. Employees attending external meetings are expected to participate in discussions and ensure their references to the City reflect Council and all staff in a positive manner.

Meeting Guest Arrival

An employee that is holding a meeting will notify Customer Service in advance of the meeting, either through booking the facilities through the City's Microsoft Outlook, or through an alternative means.

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When the guest(s) of the scheduled meeting arrive, Customer Service will notify the employee who is organizing the meeting. The guest may be offered a seat in the lobby until the employee, or alternate, arrives to escort them to the appropriate meeting room. It is the responsibility of the employee(s) hosting the meeting to be readily available to meet the visitor or arrange for an alternate to be available. The organizer of the meeting, as well as reception where available, will ensure the visitors to City facilities adhere to our health and safety policies by signing in and out of the building they are visiting. Coordinators of the meetings must also ensure that a building orientation is provided to the visitors outlining the safety procedures in the event of an emergency and where washroom facilities are.

Service Requests

Service requests are created for customer issues and maintained in the corporate tracking system. Customers can report an issue through Customer Services, the appropriate department, or through the website. Service requests are issues that cannot be resolved at the first point of contact.

The service desk is monitored by the municipal team. Response times may vary depending on the nature of the request. The appropriate department will monitor the status of requests and ensure response by the departments in accordance with the service standards. Requests are processed based on priority at the discretion of the Municipality. Staff may need to follow up by telephone or email should they have any questions or need additional information. Customers are requested to acknowledge that the Municipality must consider the needs of the whole community. They are to provide honest and respectful communication with a goal of improving services.

In order to submit a Request for Service to the Municipality, the requester is required to provide as much information as possible including:

- Contact Information (name, address, telephone number, email address)
- Details of the request
- Location
- Date
- Resolution being sought

G. Requests to Speak with the Mayor or Councillor

If a customer indicates that they would like to speak with the Mayor or Councillor regarding an issue:

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- Ask if you are able to provide assistance. It may be an issue that staff can assist with that can be logged into the issue tracking system. The City Clerk or CAO are available to assist and speak with the customer.
- If it is a matter that cannot be resolved by staff, or the customer wishes to speak with the Mayor/Councillor directly, provide the option to speak with the City Clerk or CAO, or provide the Mayor/Councillor contacts as they appear on the website. More information is available at <https://www.kenora.ca/en/your-government/mayor-and-council.aspx>

All staff are encouraged to direct customers who wish to report an issue through the website or contact Customer Services directly.

H. Customer Feedback, Measuring and Monitoring

Customer feedback is an integral component of service delivery in the City of Kenora. The city will embrace "Municipal Service Excellence" and seek feedback. The City recognizes the value of public input and will monitor feedback to ensure continuous improvement.

There are several customer service access points on the website to contact the City:

- ✓ Compliments
- ✓ Report It
- ✓ Contact Us

Website Feedback

- ✓ Complaints
- ✓ Municipal Service Centres

Compliments

Compliments are forwarded to the Communications division at communications@kenora.ca and shared with staff via the appropriate venue (i.e., employee website, Manager, etc.)

Complainants

Customer complainants are handled through the Corporate Complaints Policy AF-10-10

Report It

The City website offers several links for customers to submit a service request. Reporting an issue or concern is also accessible from the "I'd Like To" drop down menu at the top of the page.

The issues are directed to the applicable department for response to the customer.

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Contact Us

There are many ways to contact the City, however, the main contact is:
City of Kenora, 1 Main Street South, Kenora, ON P9N 3X2
Tel: 807-467-2000
Emergency After Hours Water & Sewer Line 1-807-467-2090

Website Feedback

The City website provides an avenue for customers to comment on the website and make suggestions for improvement. Look for the link in the footer of every page. The data is tracked and responded to by Communications.

Unreasonable Customer Behaviour

The City of Kenora endeavors to provide exemplary service to all members of the public and aims to address customer service requests equitably, comprehensively, and in a timely manner.

Vexatious, frivolous, and/or unreasonably persistent requests may compromise the Municipality's ability to deliver good customer service in an equitable, efficient and effective manner. The Municipality's Community Code of Conduct guides staff in identifying and managing these situations, with the intent of dealing with customers in ways that are consistent, fair and reasonable while acknowledging that there may be a need to shield staff from unreasonable behaviour.

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"Appendices A"

Sample wording for "Voicemail Procedures"

Sample wording for an "out of office" voicemail greeting is as follows:

"Thank you for your call. You have reached (employee name)'s office, (position). I am out of the office until (date of return to office). If you leave your name, number and a brief message after the beep, I will return your call by (date call will be returned by). If your call is urgent and you need to speak with someone immediately, please call (name, position) at (phone number) and they will be happy to assist you."

The voicemail message can also be modified to indicate that the individual is committed to meetings for the day, or applicable period, and not available for calls until a certain time. Sample wording for an "unavailable for meetings" voicemail greeting is as follows:

"Thank you for your call. You have reached (employee name)'s office, (position). I am in the office but committed to meetings for (the day / week / other). If you leave your name, number and a brief message after the beep, I will return your call by (date call will be returned by). If your call is urgent and you need to speak with someone immediately, please call (name, position) at (phone number) and they will be happy to assist you."

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"Appendices B"

Suggested wording for "Email Standards"

Suggested wording for this type of out of office email response would be:

"Thank you for your email. You have reached (employee name)'s office, (position). I am out of the office until (date of return to office). (Alternatively, "I am in the office but committed to meetings for the day.") I will be checking my emails on a (regular / occasional / other) basis during this time. (Alternatively, "I will not be available by email during this period.") If your email is of an urgent nature and you need to speak with someone more quickly, please contact (name, position) at (email address) and they will be happy to assist you."