

Customer Service Policy

Policy Statement

Aligned with its corporate values of respect, cooperation, innovation and integrity, the Municipality of Middlesex Centre is committed to delivering effective, equitable and accessible customer service.

Staff will provide the best customer service possible and will work to ensure that each customer experience is meaningful, fair and respectful.

Likewise, customers (residents, visitors, businesses and others) are expected to behave in a respectful manner which promotes a positive environment.

Scope

This policy applies to all forms of customer service by municipal employees to the community, and appropriate conduct by customers requesting information, a service, filing a complaint or compliment, or providing feedback, and includes but is not limited to online, electronic, print and verbal communications.

Supporting Policies and Procedures

Supporting this policy is a Customer Service Procedure. The procedure outlines service standards, roles and responsibilities, and response to customer service-related complaints.

Other relevant Middlesex Centre policies and procedures include, but are not limited to:

- Accessibility Policy
- Codes of Conduct (Employee and Council)
- Respect in the Workplace Policy
- R Zone Policy and Procedure
- Social Media Policy

Customer Service Procedure

Purpose

The Municipality of Middlesex Centre (“Middlesex Centre” or “Municipality”) recognizes the importance of delivering effective and equitable service to its customers as per the Customer Service Policy. The purpose of this document is to provide supporting operational details to enforce the policy.

Scope

This procedure applies to all Middlesex Centre staff and contracted staff working on behalf of the Municipality.

This procedure applies to all customer service interactions between Middlesex Centre staff and its customers including but is not limited to verbal, print, electronic and online communications.

Definitions

Customer: Middlesex Centre customers are anyone interacting with municipal staff.

Customer Service: The provision of services to residents, businesses, and other customers of the Municipality. Customer service activities fall into different categories:

- **Inquiries:** A customer requesting information. Inquiries can vary in specificity. A customer may want general information about a topic (e.g., when is the arena open), or they may require clarification regarding a particular issue.
- **Service Requests:** A formal request made by a customer asking the Municipality for the provision of a service. Service requests are actionable in nature and have a clear resolution. Examples include clearing road debris, enrolling in e-billing, and renting a Middlesex Centre facility.
- **Complaints:** An expression of dissatisfaction concerning an action or lack of action regarding services, facilities and and/or operations provided by Middlesex Centre and its staff. When

filed, formal complaints require a response from the Municipality unless deemed frivolous in nature.¹

- Non-actionable customer service interactions: Interactions that do not necessitate a direct action but still fall under the umbrella of customer service. This includes customer comments, compliments, and suggestions.

Customer Service Team: Middlesex Centre staff from various departments who are the first employees who greet visitors, answer main phone lines or respond to questions from the general email address. These are usually, but not always, the staff at the front desk of municipal facilities.

First Contact Resolution: Refers to the resolution of a service request or inquiry with only one employee. The first contact is not necessarily the customer service team. With more complicated inquiries, the first contact is the subject matter expert who oversees the area of inquiry. The first contact is expected to gather answers from other staff members and provide a consolidated response to the inquiry, rather than passing customers from person-to-person. In the case of a service request, resolution means that the process to meet the request has been initiated. In the case of an inquiry, the customer has either had their question answered or been given the resources required to resolve their inquiry.

Service Availability: Refers to hours the service is available or also known as operating hours.

Service Channels: The methods of communication between Middlesex Centre and its customers, including email, telephone, verbal, written and online communication.

Service Standards: A distinct commitment to a measurable level of performance that customers can expect under normal circumstances. They clarify service expectations and ensure accountability for service performance across all departments.²

Roles & Responsibilities

Anyone representing Middlesex Centre is responsible for delivering high quality customer service. Additionally, this section details the customer service responsibilities of Middlesex Centre staff.

All Employees:

- All employees should be aware of and meet the expectations for customer service outlined in the Customer Service Policy and this procedure.

¹ [Middlesex Centre. "Complaint Handling Policy".](#)

² [Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. "Service Standards".](#)

Contractors with a Customer Service Role:

- All Middlesex Centre contractors who provide customer service should be aware of and meet the expectations for customer service outlined in the Customer Service Policy and this procedure.

Supervisors/Managers:

- Supervisors and managers are responsible for enforcing the standards laid out in the customer service policy and procedure.
- Supervisors and managers are responsible for ensuring their staff have the resources they need to serve customers effectively; this includes providing staff with relevant training.
- Supervisors and manager who oversee contractors providing customer service activities for Middlesex Centre are responsible for ensuring the contractors have the resources they need to provide effective customer service.

Directors:

- Directors have oversight of customer service operations in their respective departments. They are responsible for prioritizing customer service objectives based on feedback mechanisms such as customer comments, staff input, and the customer satisfaction survey.
- Directors are responsible for reporting annually on their department's ability to meet customer service standards.

CAO:

- The CAO is responsible for the overall customer service direction for the Municipality. This includes reviewing annual reports on service standards from each department.

Council:

- Council members are responsible for reviewing the Customer Service Policy and procedure and for receiving a report on the findings of the Customer Satisfaction Survey once per council term.

Service Standards

The following Service Standards will be adhered to while performing customer service duties.

Note: Service Standards for responsiveness apply to non-emergency customer interactions with staff who are actively working. Additional department-specific Service Standards may exist separately from the list below.

Table: Service Standards

Communication	Expected Standard
First contact request resolution for all communication methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Customer Service Team will answer general questions as their knowledge permits and then transfer to subject matter expert, who becomes the first point of contact on a matter. • This person will respond to the question/concern/inquiry. • This person will gather information from other departments/external sources when required and respond to the customer. They will not continue to transfer the customer. • Teams where common questions will span multiple departments are encouraged to arrange for cross-training from the other departments. (For example, building officials should be trained by finance on payment methods so they can answer customer questions without delay.)
Response time for requests for all communication methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many straightforward requests can and should be answered within 2 business days. • Where requests are more complicated and require additional time to respond: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Acknowledge receipt of customer request within 2 business days. ○ Respond within 5 business days for questions that require internal information for response. ○ Respond within 5 days and provide a timeline for expected delivery when dealing with external information (e.g., Ministries, CAs, other municipalities, County, MPP, MP, railways, outside business, etc.). ○ Thereafter, provide periodic updates to the customer as appropriate.
Email (including requests received through web-based systems)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response times for requests as above. • If email is received through a web-based system that provides an automatic response to the customer, there is no need to acknowledge receipt of the email.
Written correspondence (faxes, letters, and memos)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response times for requests as above. • If written response is required, response should be posted within 10 business days of receipt.

Communication	Expected Standard
Telephone/ voice mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer the phone whenever possible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customers expect all staff to answer their telephone whenever possible. Leaving a call to go to voicemail should be the last option. ○ If on another call, staff should finish the call. There is no need to put the call on hold. • Check voicemail daily at a minimum. • Respond to voicemail within 2 business days. • Response times for requests as above.
In-person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greet in-person customers as they arrive. • Attend to walk-in customers as soon as possible. If on the telephone, acknowledge the customer, finish your call, and then serve them next. • Outside of pre-scheduled appointments, serve customers in the order in which they arrive. • If a customer comes in with no appointment and no staff are able to help at that time, schedule an appointment within 5 business days. • Response times for requests as above.
After hours communications (non-emergency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to inquiries/requests received outside of business hours within 2 business days (inquiries/requests received in the evenings or on weekends and statutory holidays). • Response times for requests as above. • As per the Right to Disconnect Policy, staff are not required to respond to inquiries outside of their scheduled working hours.
During staff absences longer than 1 business day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If absent for an extended period (more than 1 business day), staff should update email and voicemail messages to include an out of office notice. • Out-of-office notice should include an alternative contact (another staff member) or the generic department extension and email address. If that is unavailable, staff may refer to the main desk at the municipal office; please notify the main desk staff if referring to them.

Support for Staff

Staff Support – Resources for Customer Service Team

The Customer Service Team will be empowered to answer basic customer inquiries (such as road closures, operating hours, location of forms on website, etc.) in addition to provide specific services such as booking or taking payments, as outlined in their job description. To support this, the Customer Service Team may request guidance documents and/or training from various departments, and departments are encouraged to provide brief “knowledge articles” for front line staff as a reference guide. Departments are also encouraged to share timely news (such as closure dates, etc.) so that the Customer Service Team can respond to inquires.

Staff Support – Meeting the Standards

Staff should speak to their supervisor or manager should they have difficulty in meeting the Service Standards set out in this policy.

Staff Support – Customer Service Escalation

Escalation is the process by which a staff member will route a customer to a manager or director as required.

There are multiple circumstances in which a customer service interaction may be escalated:

- The customer is unsatisfied with the support they have received and requests to speak with the staff member’s superior.
- The staff member believes the interaction should be escalated to best meet the needs of the customer.
- The customer is engaging in inappropriate behaviour. If in person, the staff member should ensure their safety in the situation, up-to-and-including calling the police. If on the telephone, staff may politely ask the customer to call back at a later time and hang-up if a caller is abusive or using foul language. If in writing (including email, website, social media, etc.), staff should notify their supervisor of the situation. The municipality will follow the enforcement actions laid out in the R Zone Policy and Procedure.
- The customer has filed a formal complaint. In this case, the complaint will be reviewed by Clerk and forwarded to CAO for follow-up as required.

Customer Service Team staff and other employees with customer-facing positions should receive training in de-escalation. Individual teams should establish best practices for handling escalation within their specific work environment.

Evaluating Customer Service

Annual Customer Service Summary

The Director of Corporate Services will prepare an annual customer service summary indicating customer service volumes by service channel, current Service Standard targets, and the extent to which those standards have been met.

To support this summary, each department will report on customer Service Standards annually. The level of detail in these reports will change as metric tracking capacity expands at the municipality, but in general the reports will provide insight on:

- To what extent each department is meeting Service Standards
- What challenges departments may currently have in meeting Service Standards
- The number of formal complaints filed regarding customer service within the department

The Director of Corporate Services will work with each department to establish a reporting framework/template that considers the information they are already tracking.

The customer service summary will be presented to the CAO for review.

Periodic Customer Satisfaction Surveys

At the organization-wide level, Middlesex Centre will conduct customer satisfaction surveys once per council term.

- The survey will include quantitative information on customer satisfaction with the services the Municipality provides.
- The survey will include a feedback component through which customers can provide comments and suggestions on municipal operations.
- The survey will include optional questions around demographics which will be used to better understand Middlesex Centre's customer-base. For example, insights on the breakdown between resident and non-resident customers.

The results of this survey will be presented to Council for review.

Review of Policy and Procedure

This procedure and the associated Customer Service Policy will be reviewed once per council term to ensure alignment with legislation and corporate values and operations.