

Customer Bill of Rights Frequently Asked Questions

Anticipated Questions with Answers from Customers regarding the

CUSTOMER BILL OF RIGHTS

- **Is this a warrantee or a guarantee? What is my recourse if the City fails to provide?**

The Customer Bill of Rights is our vision of great customer service and our goal. Please elevate issues to supervisors, managers, or the Customer Service Bureau at 206-684-2489 (684-CITY).

- **Would there be a certain representative whom they can contact without having to call back and get another person whom they would have to explain the whole situation to again?**

Each employee should own the customer's problem or issue and make sure that they get to the right place or refer them to someone who can like the Customer Service Bureau.

- **What would be the "average" time frame be to get a "call back" or some correspondence? What about a resolution to the issue?**

The City's goal is to return all phone calls and emails within one business day and to return all correspondence within 10 business days. Resolution times can vary greatly depending on the nature and complexity of the service request.

- **If someone does not speak English – to what lengths will you try to communicate with the individual or accommodate the language difference?**

The City will provide interpretation services upon request, and City employees have received training on how to use the City's employee Language Bank and Language Line services. City employees who need further assistance should contact the Customer Service Bureau.

- **What is the process for submittal of paperwork? Will City offices serve as a "fax line" or interoffice mailing for customers? We already get asked from customers if they can hand in paperwork for delivery to other departments (DPD, DEA, Muni Court).**

The Neighborhood Service Centers only receive interoffice mail services 2 days a week, so it is not appropriate for them to serve as intake centers for transactions that are time sensitive or involve money. For other types of transactions, City employees should use their best judgment, and if they intake service requests make sure that they will get to the right place or person and get resolved.

- **Is this a guarantee that the people answering the phones at the City will be courteous and how promptly are they going to take care of my needs? What if they don't – how do I complain? What if they do? Where can I compliment.**

The City will provide courteous and professional services when answering the telephone. City employees are encouraged to share their name and contact information with callers. That way, customers may re-contact them later and locate supervisors and managers when issues need to be escalated. Customers are encouraged to escalate issues to supervisors, managers, and the Customer Service Bureau.

- **When I call the City, it is very hard for me to get to the person who knows the answer to my questions. The first person I talk to rarely knows anything, and just transfers me to someone else. How will you share information between City departments so that I can get correct information the first time?**

Currently, the City uses its web site as its knowledgebase and may develop another computer-based knowledge system sometime in the future. City employees should own the customer's problem or issue, research the City's web site, and make sure that the customer gets to the right place or refer them to someone who can like the Customer Service Bureau.

- **When I try to look up information for the City, I rarely find what I am looking for. In fact, I get a lot of conflicting information and often call the wrong number. Will there be a new, more intuitive way for me to look up what I need? How does this Bill of Rights improve this issue?**

If you look something up on the web site or in the phone book and cannot find it, please report that issue to the responsible department or the Customer Service Bureau. Similarly, if you look something up and find conflicting information, please report that issue to the responsible department or Customer Service Bureau.

- **There are five pages of phone numbers in the phone book for the City of Seattle, if I can call any City number to locate a service or initiate a request, what happens if I call the wrong department? How many times will I be transferred? How long will I be expected to wait? Will my call be returned even if I left a message at the 'wrong' voicemail box?**

Please call the Customer Service Bureau at 206-684-2489 (684-CITY) for information about city services. This should eliminate the need for more than one call transfer. The Customer Service Bureau can connect you to the services you are looking for or can take in your service request for you, especially if you have having problems or there is a need to coordinate the City's response with more than one department. The Customer Service Bureau's goal is to answer 80 % of its calls within 30 seconds. And each City employee is expected to return all voice mail messages, even if the customer called the wrong place.

- **If I go into a Service Center will they help me or put me on the phone with someone else? I came in person because I did not want to use the phone.**

Unfortunately, there is a limit to the amount of direct services that the Neighborhood Service Centers can provide, and they must often contact other City staff around the city to help you resolve your issue. And those other City employees are often best suited to help you resolve your issue. Neighborhood Service Center staff is encouraged to use their best judgment about when they can add value to the transaction or should let City staff interact with the customer one-on-one.

- **What can I do if my needs are not met with clear and accurate information?**

Customers are encouraged to ask for clarification and more explanation. If that does not resolve the situation, customers should escalate issues to supervisors, managers, or the Customer Service Bureau.

- **Looks nice on paper but what does this really mean to me?**

The City is committed to continuous improvement, but we cannot fix things if we do not know they are broken. We need you, the customers, to give us your suggestions and to let us know what we are doing right, so we can replicate it in other places.

- **What can I do if I am not treated with respect?**

Customers should contact a supervisor, manager, or the Customer Service Bureau.

- **What is considered a timely manner; one hour, one day, one week?**

The City's goal is to return all phone calls and emails within one business day and to return all correspondence within 10 business days. Resolution times can vary greatly depending on the nature and complexity of the service request.

- **To whom will regular evaluations and reports on overall performance in addressing /resolving customers' needs be sent? Who will be evaluating the requests? Will the evaluations be available to customers? What impact do these evaluations have on staff?**

Each department has been encouraged to put in place an easy to use mechanism for customer feedback and a Voice of the Customer Team that will then review and prioritize the feedback. Some changes will be simple, straightforward, and easy to make by front line staff and supervisors. Others may require significant analysis, planning, and implementation by upper-management. Public information and records will always be made available upon request by the public. City employees, including affected front line staff, will always be interviewed, consulted or otherwise involved in the process improvement projects.

- **Who is a customer?**

Customers are the people who actually touch and use our products and services. For every product and service there is a different customer and sometimes there are multiple customers.

- **What about our taxpayers and residents?**

Taxpayers and residents are our customers when they touch and use our products and services. When they are simply paying taxes, voting, and participating in other civic engagement they are more appropriately referred to as owners or shareholders of the organization.

- **Is the customer always right?**

No. The City is a complex organization that provides infrastructure, power, water, and garbage services. It also plays a major role regulating the community to provide for the public's health, safety, and welfare. As such, city employees must frequently ask customers to do things they would rather not do, and conversely, customers sometimes ask for things that the city simply cannot perform, sometimes by law and sometimes for fiscal or other policy reasons.

The important thing is to be honest with the customer and not lead them on if the news is not good. Additionally, City employees should clearly explain the reasons for why something can or cannot be done. And customers should be offered instruction on how to contact supervisors, managers, and the Customer Service Bureau when they wish to voice their opinion about city policy, so that their opinions may be recorded.