



Customer Service Standards Policy

Policy Number:	CS-POL-2023-001
Applies to:	All Employees and Members of Council, Boards, Committees and Volunteers
Approval Date:	September 11, 2023
Revision Date(s):	None
Approval Authority:	Council, approved by Council Resolution No. RES-280-2023

1. Policy Statement

The Town of Collingwood supports sound governance, transparency and accountability including a focus on service excellence with customer service is a key priority. The Town is committed to friendly, courteous, timely, accurate and complete responses to customer/stakeholder inquiries, complaints, and issues.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out clearly defined standards regarding the level of customer service expected to supply the most efficient and effective service delivery to our internal and external customers.

This policy outlines the expected customer service standards in areas of telephone answering, e-mail, mail, fax, front counter service and customer complaints and compliments.

Setting these expectations supports ensuring that staff are trained, and skilled and that sufficient resources are available to achieve the desired results is critical to the delivery of excellent customer service, and that there is reporting provided to senior management.

3. Definitions

- **Service Collingwood** – refers to the centralized customer service team that falls within Customer & Corporate Services.
- **Correspondence** – refers to communication expressed by letters, email, or fax.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Town of Collingwood, including full-time, part-time, permanent, temporary, casual, and students. In addition, this policy applies to Members of Council and Advisory Committees and Boards, where indicated.

5. Principles of the Policy

The standards outlined in this policy are the Town's commitment to:

- Provide exceptional customer service
- Enhance communications with customers and staff
- Provide service excellence at all levels within the Town
- 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

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

6. Roles and Responsibilities

- 6.1. Employees are responsible to:
 - i. Adhere to the standards set out in this policy.
 - ii. Participate and engage in training opportunities that support the Customer Service Standards policy.
 - iii. Discuss any difficulties or barriers encountered in meeting the objectives of this policy with their immediate supervisor.
 - iv. Staff should do what is necessary to help a customer even if it is not their area of responsibility or if they have no personal knowledge of the subject matter. This may involve taking down pertinent details concerning the issue and relevant contact information and advising the customer that these will be provided to Service Collingwood (centralized customer service) for proper logging and follow-up to take place. Alternatively, a Service Collingwood business card/contact information may be provided. It is not acceptable to say, "that's not my responsibility".
- 6.2. Department Heads and Managers are responsible to:
 - i. Ensure staff are aware of the Customer Service Standards Policy and relevant procedures.
 - ii. Provide and support attendance at the necessary training and provide coaching to help staff understand and meet the standards.
 - iii. Continue to monitor the standards through the performance evaluation process.
 - iv. Department Heads are responsible for arranging the type of services desired for Service Collingwood to respond to and working with the Customer Service Manager to complete Division Service Agreements.

These agreements will outline which types of inquiries are to be handled by Service Collingwood and by the division.

- v. The CAO, or designate, may approve reasonable deviations from this Policy on an exception basis.
- 6.3. Council, Committee and Board Members are responsible to:
- i. Direct inquiries/complaints that require corporate action to Service Collingwood for tracking and follow-up until resolved.
 - ii. When following up on these items on behalf of Council and Committee Members, staff will acknowledge that they are following up on an inquiry/complaint at the request of a Council and/or Committee Member and cc the Council and/or Committee Board Members who received the original request.
 - iii. The Mayor will respond on behalf of Council if correspondence is sent to all Members of Council.
 - iv. Adhere to the Staff/Council Relations Policy when addressing inquiries/complaints.
- 6.4. Service Collingwood members are responsible to:
- i. Act as ambassadors and provide guidance to customers and staff in support of meeting the policy standards.
 - ii. Work with staff to escalate open requests to meet service levels and close the loop with customers.
 - iii. Create a repertoire (“wiki”) of frequently asked questions and the resolutions to aid in single contact resolutions.
 - iv. Review and update the Customer Service Standards Policy.

7. Policy

7.1. Service Collingwood

Service Collingwood is the Town’s main point of contact for the community to provide and respond to questions about the town programs and services.

Service Collingwood is committed to the following service standards with Customer Service Ambassadors available Monday to Friday, except holidays, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.:

- **Phone:** Customer Service Ambassadors aim to answer calls live, however voicemail will be returned within 1 business day.
 - Customer Service Ambassadors are available by phone at 705-445-1030, extension 0.
- **Email:** Customer Service Ambassadors will acknowledge within two (2) business days.
 - Customer Service Ambassadors are available by emailing service@collingwood.ca
- **Online Service Requests:** The Service Collingwood Portal is available 24/7 at service.collingwood.ca, where citizens can find information on common requests and submit detailed service requests, such as report a pothole, park & trail maintenance and other concerns. A case number is provided for follow up and

citizens are notified when a service issue has been resolved and when work is completed.

- **Mail and Fax:** mail and fax correspondence is monitored daily Monday to Friday. Queries are date stamped and forwarded to the expert department to be processed.
- **Town Hall Service Counter:** Customer Service Ambassadors aim for wait times to be less than 10 minutes, unless advised otherwise.
- **Response times:** The customer service standard is full resolution within five (5) business days. If unable to respond fully within the required amount of time, provide a response time estimate based on the complexity of the inquiry and availability of staff.

7.2. Corporate Customer Service Standards

Town staff strive to provide exceptional customer service to all customers and residents.

The corporate customer service standards are a minimum level of service to both internal and external customers.

Channels of Communication

The customer Service Standards Policy provides a standard for quality delivery of services through the following customer communication channels:

- In person
- Telephone / Voicemail / Text Message
- Email / Correspondence
- Web based / Social Media

7.2.1. In Person Services

- a) A staff person will be available during business hours at front counters/facilities open to the public. In situations where this is not possible, a service disruption sign must be placed on the door indicating time of return or where to inquire.

7.2.2. Telephone/Voicemail / Corporate Cell Phone Services

- a) Customer calls will be returned as soon as possible when they are received.
- b) All calls shall be returned within two (2) business days. Depending on the nature of the call, staff's response within two (2) business days may not always provide a complete resolution, but there shall be provided an acknowledgement that the message has been received.
- c) Callers will be assisted and if needed, will be directed to the correct area and will have their issue resolved by involving as few Town staff as possible.
- d) Personal voicemail greetings will be courteous, give the caller as much information as possible and request callers leave a detailed message.

- e) Text messages may be received but are not tracked as a formal customer service inquiry, to ensure timely and appropriate response in writing customers shall contact via email.

7.2.3. Correspondence/Email Services

Written communication can include but is not limited to emails, letters, memos, faxes, etc. Written communication does not include text messages.

7.2.3.1. **Letters (mail or faxed)** – customers will receive a response to correspondence (example: general inquiry) within five (5) business days of receipt by the Town unless Council action is required as it will be forwarded to the next appropriate Council meeting.

7.2.3.2. **Emails** - Customers will receive an initial response to an email inquiry within three (3) business days.

- For letters/emails that represent comments or feedback regarding large projects and applications (e.g. planning applications, official plan review etc.), feedback is summarized and concerns are addressed typically through a staff report, rather than to each individual.

7.2.4. Extended Absences

- a) When staff members are going to be absent for longer than two (2) consecutive business days, their voicemail and email out of office messages will reflect their time away.
- b) This standard shall not apply to unexpected absences such as the staff member being absent due to an unexcepted illness. In this instance Human Resources will coordinate an update with Information Technology as soon as practical.

7.2.5. Response Times

- a) The customer service standard is full resolution within five (5) business days. If this is not able to be completed the customer should be notified that their request has been received and be provided with an outline of when they may expect a more detailed response or action. If a shorter timeframe for response is required by law or for other reasons, staff should meet that shorter timeframe.
- b) If unable to respond fully within the required amount of time, provide a response time estimate based on the complexity of the inquiry and availability of staff.

7.2.6. After-hours Inquiries

- a) All after-hours high priority or public safety issues will be directed to the town's after-hours emergencies call handling service.

- b) To maintain work/life balance, responses to general inquiries received during non-business hours (evenings, Saturdays, Sundays, and statutory holidays, office closures) will be within two business days following the after-hours period/closure.

7.2.7. Online (websites, social media, Engage

7.2.7.1. Web Based Services

Staff should make customers aware of the website at www.collingwood.ca and the features that are available for keeping current on news and events, online self-serve options, as well as other information sources and services. The Town website contains valuable information concerning services, forms, Council agendas and minutes, by-laws, user fees and charges, tax information, etc.

7.2.7.2. Social Media

Social media channels are not covered by the Customer Service Standards Policy. These communication channels are governed by the Social Media Policy. All inquiries requiring a response should be channeled through Service Collingwood for appropriate action and tracking. Social media sites must include a statement indicating this.

7.2.7.3. Engage Collingwood

All inquiries received through Engage Collingwood will receive a response within three (3) business days.

8. Complaints and Compliments

The Town's Customer Service Satisfaction Survey is available online and in person at select Town facilities. The public is encouraged to provide feedback on their customer service experience.

To report a compliment or complaint about a recent service experience, the public can use the '[Compliment or Complaints](#)' button on Service Collingwood. Or to report an issue for an item not listed on Service Collingwood, the public can report through the '[Report all other issues](#)' button.

If customers are dissatisfied with the service they receive, they can escalate the issue. If the issue has been initiated through Service Collingwood and/or the Department and the customer is not satisfied with the resolution or a response has not been received within the service standard, they can escalate it to the Executive Director, Customer and Corporate Services followed by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The escalation process is documented on Collingwood.ca and in the Customer Service Standards Procedure.

9. Reporting and Performance Monitoring

A bi-annual report on compliance with Customer Service Standards will be provided to the Executive Director, Customer & Corporate Services, for inclusion on a Department Head Meeting Agenda, as appropriate.

10. References and Related Documents

[Service Collingwood](#)

[Municipal Law Enforcement Customer Service Policy](#)

[Building Department Service Standards](#)

[Customer Service Survey](#)

Accessible Communications Policy and Corporate Style Guide

[Social Media Policy](#)

Discrimination, Violence and Harassment Free Workplace Policy

11. Consequences of Non-Compliance

Coaching on Customer Service Standards, and additional training, will be the first action for non-compliance. In instances of a blatant disregard of the set standards or repeat occurrences of failure to adhere to the standards, progressive discipline will apply.

When staffing resources are identified as being the main reason for non-compliance, the impacted Department Head will notify the Customer Service Manager to seek assistance with setting revised expectations for full responses. The Executive Director must be consulted and any official deviations to this policy will require approval from the Chief Administrative Officer.

12. Review Cycle

This Policy will be reviewed at least once per Term of Council.