



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

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Customer Service Criteria: Agency and Executive-Level Criteria for Customer Service Practices

This technical paper provides fundamental practices (criteria) for ensuring high-quality customer service, in two tables. The first table is targeted to agencies, and the second is focused on the executive-level—the county executive or other elected leaders. Together, both tables address the essential components for effective customer service practices across King County's services. A glossary on page seven provides definitions of key terms. Sources for the criteria are directly linked from the right column in each table, and detailed source information is listed on the last page of this document. The complete source list is also available on the [Customer Service Criteria](#) page on the King County Auditor's Office website.

In performing our audit work, the Auditor's Office will look to the practices in the tables when evaluating customer service. If agencies lack these components at the time of the audit, the deficiencies could form the basis for audit findings and recommendations. Audits will not be limited to these components; rather, this document and the included tables and references will be used as initial criteria for assessing the effectiveness of operations. The tables include many practices already in place in King County.

"King County government provides fiscally responsible, quality-driven local and regional services for healthy, safe, and vibrant communities."¹ Delivering quality-driven services means knowing your customers, understanding their needs, and ensuring their satisfaction. These criteria operationalize King County's commitment to ensuring that county customers receive high-quality services.

These fundamental practices originate in criteria on effective customer service from federal government and King County reference sources. We also worked with subject matter experts and leaders across county functions, including the Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget and the Department of Human Resources.

The Agency Criteria Table

The agency-focused table is meant to be flexible for agencies of different sizes and services. The table is divided into three segments: Strategic Planning, Culture, and Implementation.

In using the table, first review each of the criteria elements and consider their purpose and intent. How do your agency's current activities meet that intent? What actions would your agency need to meet the intent or improve existing processes? Identify the needs and challenges for your agency and categorize steps to address them. There may be multiple ways to meet each criterion.

In some cases, implementation may require partnering with the county's customer service experts: the county customer service officer; customer engagement specialists at the Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget; equity and social justice expertise through the County's Office of Equity and Social Justice; peer work with agencies with similar customers and/or services; and Department of Information Technology systems resources.

¹ King County 2015 Strategic Plan Mission

King County Auditor's Office Customer Service Audit Criteria: Agency-Level

Please see the linked criteria sources for more information and further reading.

Segment 1: Customer Service Strategic Planning and Implementation		
No.	Criteria	Source
1.0	Agency has a documented comprehensive customer service strategy that includes specific elements	Green Book
1.0.1	Names the leaders accountable for customer service strategy at the agency, unit (and/or division), and program levels	OMB
1.0.2	References the County Strategic Plan, the agency Business Plan and other agency guidance, and explains how the customer service strategy aligns with and supports those plans	OMB
1.0.3	Considers ESJ and involves community members or other expertise in program-level service design and review processes	KC ESJ
1.0.4	References the elements of the King County Customer Service Promise and explains how they are met by program implementation	KC Promise
1.1	Agency has implemented its comprehensive customer service strategy.	Green Book
1.2	Agency has a documented customer service performance measurement system that includes specific elements:	KC CX Guide OMB
1.2.1	Identifies the services provided by the agency and the ways (channels or methods) customers access those services (in the context of measuring service performance)	KC CX Guide
1.2.2	Direct customer service-related data measures (call wait times, number of customers served, etc.)	GPRAMA EO 13571
1.2.3	Quantitative, relevant metrics of customer service-related performance (calls answered within two minutes, peak wait times under five minutes, etc.)	OMB
1.2.4	Customer feedback and satisfaction data measures	EO 12862
1.2.5	Customer satisfaction performance metrics and benchmarks	EO 12862
1.2.6	A regular internal scorecard, reported to department leadership	OMB KC CX Guide
1.2.7	A regular public scorecard reporting customer service performance data	KC CX Guide KCIT SP OMB

1.2.8	Ensures that a strategic ESJ lens is applied to each element of the performance measurement process—metrics, standards, and internal and public reporting	KC ESJ
1.3	Agency has implemented its customer service performance measurement system	Green Book
1.4	Agency has documented process for taking action based on customer service metrics and customer feedback and evidence of actions taken	KC CX Guide
1.5	Agency has a documented strategy for understanding the customer that includes specific elements:	KC CX Guide OMB
1.5.1	Prioritizes evaluation of programs/services that are most important (high volume, impact, etc.)	KC CX Guide
1.5.2	Considers ESJ and involves community members or other expertise in customer needs analysis	KC ESJ
1.5.3	Sets expectations for learning about customer needs through interviews and/or observations of how they interact with the service	KC ESJ KC CX Guide OMB
1.5.4	Collects immediate customer feedback (or as soon after transactions as possible) and internally shares that feedback with team(s) involved in delivering the service	KC CX Guide OMB
1.5.5	Uses feedback mechanisms that impose minimal burden on customers and, where appropriate, uses sampling with supporting explanation	OMB
1.5.6	Identifies customer journeys and maps, analyzes, and catalogs them	KC CX Guide OMB
1.5.7	Periodically reviews detailed personas, customer segments, and service bottlenecks (<i>see Source list for more information</i>)	KC CX Guide OMB
1.6	Agency shares the results of customer analysis with agency leadership, employees, and the public	KCIT SP OMB

Segment 2: Fostering a Customer-Focused Culture of Service Delivery

No.	Criteria	Source
2.1	All employees receive training on the customer service strategy and the agency's customers	OMB
2.2	Agency has identified positions and roles that require customer service skill sets and provides those employees with training and resources necessary to support the customer service strategy	OMB
2.3	Customer service employees spend time learning and sharing best practices and tools within and outside of the agency	OMB

2.4	Agency evaluates employee performance against role-specific customer service expectations and metrics	OMB
2.5	Agency has a recognition program for exemplary employee customer service	OMB
2.6	Agency has regular processes for collecting employee feedback about customer service improvement	OMB
2.7	Agency considers ESJ and involves community members or other expertise in planning agency-level activities and policies	KC ESJ

Segment 3: Service Implementation for Customer Satisfaction

No.	Criteria	Source
3.1	Agency has processes to ensure that it is prioritizing customer service resources where customer needs are the greatest	KC ESJ KCIT SP
3.2	Agency has processes for involving customers and other stakeholders in co-creation of programs and improvements	KC ESJ OMB
3.3	Agency uses customer service tools and resources—either internally developed and/or adopted with other agencies—and shares them with others	OMB
3.4	Agency has identified where customer journeys (as part of its strategy for understanding the customer; <i>see Source links</i>) overlap with other agencies and has identified and documented processes for coordinating customer service efforts with those agencies	OMB
3.5	All IT and digital investments are tested on an ongoing basis using human-centered design processes	OMB
3.6	Agency has processes to ensure that digital services are secure from intrusion by bad actors	KCIT SP
3.7	Agency has designed each service provided by the agency to ensure it is accessible to all customers:	—
3.7.1	Digital service delivery is designed and optimized for mobile devices	KCIT SP
3.7.2	Homepages and critical documents are available in the languages most common for service customers (i.e., six languages per county demographer or others specific to customer groups)	KC ESJ
3.7.3	All digital content is accessible to people with disabilities	usability.gov
3.7.4	Agency has a documented process for engaging communities with limited internet access and considers customer journeys for those with limited internet access	KC Broadband
3.7.5	Agency has a documented process for testing access to service entry points to ensure they are clear and convenient for stakeholders	KC ESJ

The Executive Criteria Table

This table is higher-level than the agency-focused table. It includes those customer service practices which require cross-agency collaboration and common standards and expectations throughout the county. These criteria could also be applied to separately elected functions should they choose to manage customer service systems in a different way than the Executive Branch.

King County Auditor's Office Customer Service Audit Criteria: Executive-Level

Please see the linked criteria sources for more information and further reading.

No.	Criteria	Source
1.1	The County has assigned a dedicated and accountable process owner for a comprehensive customer service strategy	OMB
1.2	The County considers customer service from a systems perspective rather than siloed services and has framework(s) for addressing systemic customer engagement needs. This framework should include:	OMB CDG KC ESJ
1.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> customer journeys involving services that overlap multiple county agencies (i.e., involving coordination across agencies) customer journeys that involve customers seeking services from multiple county agencies (i.e., customers seeking to accomplish multiple tasks) 	OMB
1.3	The County collects and uses metrics showing how King County is performing on customer service at all levels—including executive, agency or department, and division	OMB
1.4	The County has a documented process for taking action based on customer service metrics	Green Book
2.1	The County has a countywide customer service strategy that is aligned with (and may be a component of) the county strategic plan. To meet these criteria, the strategy should be documented, communicated to county leadership, and include a defined process for implementation. The strategy should specify and include expectations for (some of these elements may overlap):	OMB
2.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> customer service excellence customer service innovation reimagining and reprioritizing services with a focus on the customer 	KC PSB HBR KC CX Guide KC Promise
2.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> equitable service delivery and prioritization of customer service investments, applying ESJ expertise to increase equity 	KC ESJ KC PSB

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consideration of cost-effectiveness multi-channel service delivery based on community needs and customer journeys 	KC CX Guide
2.1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • countywide customer service reporting requirements • customer service standards 	OMB
2.2	The County should provide tools, resources, and support to agencies, including:	Green Book
2.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a system for countywide customer service feedback, metrics, measurement, and continuous improvement • identifying the County's highest impact services to support prioritization • a suite of customer service trainings • subject matter experts available to support customer engagement planning and activities 	OMB
2.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a library of customer service tools and frameworks available to departments 	CDG
2.3	The County has a documented strategy for promoting and expanding digital equity, including unserved and underserved communities	KC Broadband
2.4	The County fosters and facilitates cross-jurisdictional partnerships and shared services related to customer service	KCIT SP CDG

Glossary

Term	Definition
Customer	Recipient of the products or services that an agency produces; customer may be internal or external to the County
Customer engagement	Touchpoints between the customer and organization and the actions a customer might take
Customer experience (CX)	Entirety of a customer's interactions, perceptions, and feelings about the organization, not just their perceptions about service delivery
Customer journey	Complete sum of experiences that customers go through when interacting with a service, program, and the County
Customer satisfaction	Customer's feeling after an interaction with the organization
Customer segmentation	Dividing customers into groups based on common characteristics so the county can engage them effectively and appropriately
Customer service	Advice and assistance given by the organization to customers before, during, or after interaction
Customer service analysis	Process of identifying the range of customers, understanding their needs, and how the service meets (or relates to) those needs
Customer service strategy	How an organization approaches interaction with its customers to ensure a positive experience throughout the customers' interactions with the service, program, and the County
Entry point	Start of a customer service engagement, especially important when customers do not know what service they need
ESJ	Short for equity and social justice; the theory of change that shifts practices from reactive response to proactive investment in equity
Ethnography	Study of people in their own environment through the use of methods such as participant observation and face-to-face (or videoconference) interviewing
Human-centered design	Design that aims to make systems usable and useful by focusing on the system's users and their needs and requirements
Leadership	Executive-level senior management of the county executive and separately elected county functions responsible for policy development and direction
Persona	Generalized representations of customers; a way to define different segments of the customer base through identifying traits and behavior patterns

Sources

CDG: Center for Digital Government, <https://www.govtech.com/cdg/>

EO 12862: Executive Order 12862, "Setting Customer Service Standards", September 11, 1993. Federal Register Vol. 58, No 176

EO 13571: Executive Order 13571, "Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service", April 27, 2011

GPRAMA: GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, 31 USC 1011 *et. seq.*

Green Book: Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government, United States Government Accountability Office, September 2014; GAO-14-704G

HBR: Waldron, Ted and Wetherbe, James "Ensure That Your Customer Relationships Outlast Coronavirus", Harvard Business Review, April 1, 2020

KC Broadband: King County Broadband Access Study, February 2020 (King County Ordinance 18835, Section 118, Proviso 1: Report)

KC CX Guide: Customer Experience: A Guide to Customer Experience Measurement (no date of publication provided)

KC ESJ: King County Office of Equity and Social Justice, Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan 2016-2022 (no date of publication provided)

KC Promise: King County Customer Service Promise, King County Executive (no date of publication provided)

KC PSB: Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget

KCIT SP: King County Strategic Information Technology Plan, 2020-2023, King County Department of Information Technology (no date of publication provided)

OMB: Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular No. A-11 (2019); Section 280-1 "Managing Customer Experience and Improving Service Delivery"

Usability.gov: Improving the user experience, <https://www.usability.gov/>