



APPENDIX B - CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDELINES AND SERVICE STANDARDS

Customer Service Guidelines and Standards:

The following are the City of Brantford customer service guidelines and standards as they relate to different communication channels. Expected response times are outlined by channel. In all instances staff should acknowledge that the question/comment has been received as soon as possible, and depending on complexity of the request, estimate how long it will take for the issue to be resolved.

While the standards below represent the City of Brantford's fundamental commitment to service excellence, it is important to acknowledge that exceptions may arise based on the specific nature of the service or situation. This is particularly pertinent in instances such as incidents that may impact security, where clients may experience delays in being attended to, while an issue is being resolved. Additionally, during requested investigations, there may be circumstances in which the client or agency requests information that cannot be shared until the investigation is fully completed. There are unique scenarios in which it may not be feasible to adhere to the strict 10-minute in-person client wait time or the 10-day resolution timeline. However, it remains imperative that we maintain open communication with the client or agency involved, ensuring they are kept informed of the progress. These exceptional situations are an inherent aspect of our business operations and should be managed with utmost care and transparency as needed.

Channel	Guidelines and Service Standards
Phone calls	<p>Call Answering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When answering an external phone call, a consistent and courteous greeting should be used by City staff, always including a greeting and first name, and as appropriate, an applicable office and/or an offer of assistance. • At the end of the call, staff will summarize the nature of the call, outline the next steps, set expectations for resolution, and thank the customer for their question/feedback. <p>Placing the Call on Hold</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a customer is to be placed on hold, staff will ask the caller's permission to be placed on hold.

- If the caller does not have time to wait, staff will offer to call them back at a time that is convenient.
- After placing the caller on hold, staff will check back with the caller periodically and advise that their call is important and that someone will speak to them shortly.

Call Transferring

- Staff will remain on the line to ensure the correct person is reached. Staff are encouraged to use Jabber/Internal Text Tool to confirm that staff are available to receive the call before the call is transferred.
- When the correct staff person is reached, staff will provide a warm/soft transfer whereby prior to releasing the call, staff will be notified of any information obtained to avoid having the caller repeat themselves.
- Every attempt will be made by staff to find a person who can speak with the customer right away. If all attempts at reaching a person live fail, the call will be transferred to the Knowledge Owner's/Subject Expert's voicemail.

Voicemail

Voice Mailbox Administration

- Staff voicemail greetings will include the staff's name, department/division, availability and time when the call will be returned.
- Voicemail boxes should be cleared daily by all staff so that any customer inquiries are responded to within 1-2 business days. Staff should use their discretion to triage inquiries/concerns based on level of urgency.
- Recorded vacation or absence messages will provide a co-worker's name and phone number as a backup while out of the office.
- If an employee is absent, the direct line Manager will be responsible to determine the best option to address calls that are on voice message (i.e. call forward the calls, change voicemail message to provide an alternate contact, etc.)

Leaving a Voicemail Message on a Customer's Phone

- When leaving a message on a customer's phone, staff will specify the reason for the call, date and time, that they are calling from the City of Brantford and leave their name and title, and their call back number with their extension.
- If the matter is of a private or sensitive nature, staff should use their discretion when identifying themselves or the reason for their call on a shared voicemail box (e.g. to a client exiting domestic violence.)

Mailbox Administration

- Messages left on a staff's voicemail will be returned in **one-two business days**

<p>Email/ Online Form</p>	<p>Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always use professional and courteous language in email discourse with customers. • Vacation or absence alerts/notifications will be activated by providing a co-worker's name and contact information as a backup while out of the office. • In the event of an extended or permanent absence (i.e. retirement, leave of absence, etc.), an employee's Manager shall contact IT to terminate the email address or have a standard City reply added to the email. • Customers will receive acknowledgement of receipt of an online request or email to Customer Service staff within 1-2 business days. Staff should use their discretion to triage inquiries/concerns based on level of urgency. • Emails sent directly to "Knowledge Owners/Subject Expert staff are expected to be acknowledged/replied to within 1-2 business days. An acknowledgement could simply indicate that the email has been received and a more detailed response will be provided at a later date. • Staff are expected to provide a response to the inquiry/request with a resolution or a status update regarding a timeline for resolution within ten (10) business days or within a reasonable timeframe based on the department's service standard and the issue's complexity. For example, if the service request is complicated and requires a longer wait period than expected by the customer, staff should make every effort to provide as much information/education as possible outlining steps for the "planned resolution" and expected timeline for completion. Staff should use their discretion to triage inquiries/concerns based on level of urgency.
<p>In-Person</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All customers will be welcomed politely and professionally upon their arrival at any City facility or location. • The appropriate service, direction or information will be provided by City staff promptly and courteously. • If frontline staff is unable to resolve customer queries or concerns, the customer will be directed to the appropriate staff person to be advised of the next steps. • If the customer has made an appointment and the staff person who they're meeting is not yet available, frontline staff will direct the customer to a comfortable waiting area. • Staff are expected to meet with customers with an appointment within ten (10) minutes of their arrival. • The expected maximum time that a customer without an appointment will have to wait before they are seen by a frontline Customer Service Representative is 15 minutes or 30 minutes at busy times. If a customer expects to meet with a Knowledge Owner/Subject Expert member of City staff and did not make an appointment in advance, CS staff will endeavour to connect the customer with someone on site that is available to speak with them. If no one is available on site, the customer's contact information will be taken and provided to Subject Expert staff to set up an appointment with the customer at a mutually available time. • Customers will be encouraged to make appointments in the future to minimize wait times. • Staff shall report all expected appointments in the City Hall Customer Service Appointment Booking Calendar for all staff to add City Hall in person appointments for Security and Customer Service staff's information.

<p>Letters</p>	<p>Employees responding to letters received by the City, are expected to follow these guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check letter mailbox daily and forward to the appropriate department as needed. • When responding to customer letters ensure that the correct title, name and address are used. • When a customer writes a letter to the City, they can expect the following in normal circumstances: Depending on the complexity of the request/concern, staff will endeavour to provide customers with a response to a general inquiry within five (5) business days. Staff should use their discretion to triage inquiries/concerns based on level of urgency.
<p>Social Media</p> <p>– applicable to Communications, Community Engagement and Customer Service staff who are authorized as Social Media Content Authors</p>	<p>Consistent with the City’s Social Media Policy, Communications staff responding to enquires on social media shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor social media channels regularly. • Use a positive and professional tone in all responses. • Avoid engaging in arguments or debates on social media and direct the conversation to a private channel as necessary. • If the complaint requires further investigation, ask the complainant to provide additional information through private messaging or email to communications@brantford.ca. • Avoid lengthy responses and use clear and concise language. • If the complaint requires a lengthy response, provide an initial response acknowledging the complaint and indicating that a detailed answer will be provided through private messaging or email. • If the complaint is moved to email or private messaging, follow all guidelines listed in the “Email” section of the Customer Service Standard.