



Raising the Bar: Defining & Delivering Service Standards in Public Service

Tomorrow Summit | Municipalities NL



Service Standards



Why?

Service standards can provide senior decision-makers and political leaders with important information on the services being delivered



Standards vs. Targets

Service **standards** are a public promise to your service recipients regarding the service they will receive

Service **targets** are the goals an organization is ultimately working towards



Organizational Capacity

Effective service standards must be within the capacity of what the organization can deliver

Unrealistic service standards send the wrong message as they may lead to expectations the organization cannot meet



Elements of a Service Standard

1. Definition of the service
2. Expected level of performance
3. Complaint or redress mechanism



Characteristics of Effective Service Standards



Relevant & Meaningful

The best service standards are based on client input

The client input used to establish service standards needs to provide information on two key elements:

- ✓ the level of service needed to satisfy service recipients
- ✓ the areas where standards are most wanted



Realistic

Service standards need to be based on both what the organization can deliver and what service users expect

This can be a challenging balancing act for service managers, especially when performance levels fall significantly below service recipients' expectations



Easily Understood

Service standards are intended to help communicate the level of performance the organization offers

They are meaningless if service recipients and employees do not understand them

Good service standards clearly and concretely describe the service using plain language



Equitable

Effective service standards consider the full range of client segments

They strive to ensure they can respond fairly to all service recipients



Dynamic

Service standards need to be regularly reviewed, updated, or refreshed

Needs and expectations of service recipients and the ability of the organization to deliver its services is always changing

Be careful not to become change weary!



Communicated

Service standards need to be supported with effective communication to both employees and service recipients

Standards need to be presented openly and be readily available – no one should have to go looking for them



Measurable

An effective service standard includes a measure which is:

- ✓ Easy for service recipients to understand
- ✓ Easy for the organization to measure

Without measures, service standards are essentially service pledges



Types of Service Standards



Service Standard Approach

Service standards are commonly used for both internal and external services

In both cases, they can focus on the channels service recipients use, other selected service attributes, and/or the key drivers of service



Service versus Satisfaction

Level of **Service**

- ✓ Sets expectations
- ✓ Easy to assess if standard has been met

Level of **Satisfaction**

- ✓ Rates service recipient satisfaction
- ✓ Tracks overall organizational outcomes



Advantages

The level of service approach provides very clear information to service recipients on what they should expect

It is easy to assess whether the standards have been met or not

The level of satisfaction approach directly tracks the overall outcome the organization is striving to achieve

It gets directly to the core of what needs to be accomplished



Challenges

Common service standards have the advantage of consistency

- ✓ Will standards be consistent across all departments? All services?

Service recipients do not always have the same needs and expectations for all services



Summary

Service standards set clear expectations for service recipients and employees

Effective service standards balance expectations and organizational capacity



Thank you!

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