



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Customer Service Charters Framework



November 2018

FOREWORD

The introduction of Customer Service Charters is among the public service reform initiatives that the government of the Republic of Namibia has prioritized in a bid to improve public service delivery. For accessibility and ease reference it has been found necessary to develop a single document containing the definition and contextualization of the Customer Service Charters, the practical techniques how to develop and formulate such, and pedagogic lead pertaining to implementation and sustainability thereof. It is neither a policy document nor is it prescriptive apart from a few basic rules indicated that should be universally complied with.

This is a living document which will be updated frequently to reflect challenges encountered and concomitant customer experience and related requirements. It is targeted at Offices, Ministries, Agencies and Regional Councils. It may also be used by Village and Local Authority Councils as well as parastatals. Public servants tasked with the responsibility to develop and formulate Customer Service Charters are cordially invited to obtain the latest version of this document from the Department Public Service Management, Office of the Prime Minister.

PART I

CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTERS: ESSENCE AND SIGNIFICANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia by virtue of Article 36 [Chapter 6] enjoins the Office of the Prime Minister to assist the President to carry out the Executive responsibilities entailed in the mandate of the Presidency; to spearhead government business in the Legislature; and to head and oversee the Public Administration portfolio of the government of the Republic of Namibia. Thus, the public service of Namibia is a key pillar of public management and administration that should be utilized optimally to facilitate the attainment of the set national goals as articulated in high-level statements such as Vision 2030, the National Development Plans (NDPs) and the Institutional Strategic Plans (O/M/As' & RCs' Plans). The mandate to govern boils down to a 'Social Contract' entered into between the citizenry and the government of the day. In this context, we recognize the importance of having positive and respectful relationships with all our valued customers whether individuals, corporate entrepreneurial bodies, governmental agencies or civil society entities.

2. CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTERS DEFINED

Conceptually, a Customer Service Charter can aptly be conceived of and visualised as a basic document defining the transactional contours between a service provider and the would-be recipients of such goods and services. It defines normatively the required production capacity and the requisite delivery capability expected of the service provider. While at the same time it conscientises and informs the would-be beneficiaries about both the nature and quality of the goods and services on offer as well as the deliverance timelines thereof.

The Customer Service Charter is considered to be a significant milestone in the Public Services as it integrates the functions and inputs of the various Offices/Ministries/Agencies and Regional Councils. It ensures that our customers are informed and educated about our operations and services, as well as empowered to influence the quality of service at all levels. The Customer Service Charter does not only provide customers with a clear and unambiguous statement of the level of service they can expect, but also includes a

framework that facilitates the measuring and improvement of the quality of goods and services provided and to report thereof transparently.

Customer Service Charters set out the standard of service that the broader clientele can expect in their dealings with public service institutions. It has a two-pronged purpose as it **reminds the public servants** of their singular responsibilities as **custodians** of public goods and services, while simultaneously it **empowers the recipients** of public goods and services in an unambiguous manner to know their entitlements both in terms of quality and quantity as well as the mode and manner of the delivery thereof. In this manner, it is hoped that the existence of the Customer Charters would significantly impact positively on quality service delivery and enhance the capacity of the customers to hold those in charge of the public service and the government of the day accountable.

Contemporaneously, there has been a notable and remarkable move of focus away from government to governance. This is what the erstwhile Thomas Kuhn would succinctly characterize as a scientific revolution of some sort. In contemporary intellectual parlance called a **paradigm shift**. In this time and age of knowledge-based communities, societies and nations it is no longer sufficient and satisfying to have government in seat, but it is more relevant and important to be contented with the accessibility, fairness, equity, accountability, integrity, responsiveness and professionalism of public service institutions. It suffices to say that Namibia is a rapidly changing country, with an increasingly complex and diverse customer base and growing customer expectations. To this end, Customer Service Charters allow Public Institutions to deal with the changing demands and to become more flexible and responsive to the needs of our customers. While the Charters initiative proved to be successful, we owe it to our customers and to ourselves to continuously aim higher when delivering public goods and services.

The development and introduction of Customer Service Charters in the public service of Namibia represents a remarkable hallmark in the national desire to enhance quality governance. The development of Customer Service Charters ushers the **institutionalisation** of mechanisms for an effective, efficient and interactive exchange and engagement between the governing and the governed. To live the Customer Service Charters we have so rightly and legitimately introduced beckons an **internalisation** of same. It is these two intertwined dimensions of the Charters regime that this document

attempts to address.

PART II

DEVELOPMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

1. INSTITUTIONALISATION OF CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTERS

As per Cabinet Directive, the development of Customer Service Charters was made obligatory and all O/M/As and RCs are required to develop such.

In light of the above, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) is spearheading the development of Customer Service Charters for O/M/As and RCs with the objective to inform and educate the clientele on the defined service standards that are being rendered by the public service institutions, and to call the public servants to their constitutional obligation to assist the government to deliver on its mandate.

As a result thereof, the development of Customer Service Charters has been integrated into the Performance Management System (PMS) of the Namibian public service.

2. INTERNALISATION OF CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTERS

Perceptibly public service institutions are renowned for being notorious for producing gluttonous documents that are mostly left to gather dust on the shelves. Considering this perception it is imperative that we commit to avoiding the Customer Service Charters becoming part of that discarded treasure-house. As such it is *a priority that we ensure that the Customer Service Charters are living documents occupying metaphorically the status of a Catechisms for the public servant*. Hence, the importance of facilitating an **internalisation** of the Customer Service Charters by those in positions of being custodians of public goods and services. It simply implies that it should be required of public servants to familiarise with the contents of their respective institutions' Customer Service Charters, and live to the letter and spirit of such in their day-to-day behavior when carrying out their public service responsibilities. It is incumbent upon the leadership *of the public service to ensure the availability, accessibility and visibility* of Customer Service Charters in public offices and all areas frequented by the general public. It is the responsibility of Accounting Officers in O/M/As and RCs to ensure that:

- Customer Service Charters spell out the nature of the services provided and sets the

standards of such in unambiguous terms to guarantee acceptable **quality**

- Customer Service Charters are produced and distributed to ensure **availability**;
- Customer Service Charters are distributed free of charge to the broader public to guarantee **accessibility**;
- Customer Service Charters are displayed appropriately to ensure that the customers can read them readily and easily, thus enhancing their **visibility**;
- Customer Service Charters are written in a concise manner and in a simple straightforward language to ensure **intelligibility**.

3. HOW TO DEVELOP CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

It is obligatory for public service institutions to develop Customer Service Charters. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to provide practical guidelines on developing Customer Service Charters:

- Set up a Task Force/Team to coordinate the development of Customer Service Charters;
- Identify key functional areas that directly provide services to the customers;
- Identify relevant key stakeholders for each service area;
- Set standards/service promises specific to each service provided in a clear and easily understandable language;
- Consult customers, stakeholders and personnel especially at cutting-edge level;
- Put in place an effective suggestion and complaints procedure and feedback system (how it operates; who operates it; and who monitors it);
- Draft Customer Service Charters;
- Circulate drafted Customer Service Charters to internal stakeholders for comments/suggestions and incorporate thereof;
- Ensure that institutional Core Values are in line with the ten (10) Guiding Principles of the Namibian Public Service Charter;
- Submit Customer Service Charter draft to the Accounting Officer for inputs and approval;
- Brief the political head of the O/M/A or RC e.g. Minister-in-charge;
- Forward it to the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) for endorsement; and

- Launch and publish in official language and subsequently translate into local languages.

NB: See Customer Service Charter template attached as annexure A

PART III

IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

This section aims to categorically impress upon the public servants, recipients of public goods and services and all stakeholders that, the formulation and publication of Customer Service Charters is not an end in itself, for itself and by itself. It has to be an integral part of public service operations. We have to live it!

The most burning questions arise around the issues of **effectiveness** and **sustainability**: How do we ensure that the Customer Service Charters are rolled out across the entire public service? And how do we ensure a sustainable implementation of the Customer Service Charters project to secure the desired outcome and expected impact? It is to these questions that we now turn.

1. How to implement Customer Service Charter

The introduction of a Customer Charter is a project. It has defined starting and ending phases – being the drafting and launching thereof, respectively. From that moment on, the Charter ceases to be a project and becomes a structural element of operations management. Make sure you communicate this in unambiguous terms, otherwise those responsible in your organization will feel that once the introduction of the Charter is complete their work is done. We know from experience that Charters – with service standards as key component – tend to get forgotten very quickly. This is why the embedding of Charters in the organization must be rigorously organized in advance.

Below are some of the actions to be considered when implementing Charters:

1.1 Publish with style

Actual operations under a Customer Charter start from the moment of publication. Both customers, stakeholders and staff members need to familiarise themselves with the content of the Charter. Most organizations invest much in the communication around the introduction. This might be formal congratulations extended to the first customer entitled to rely on the standards. Publication is a key moment. Put some effort into dressing up the start and generate more publicity. *What type of publicity fits your organization?*

- Make an inventory of the various formats of the charter (brochures, letters, internet, flat screen, local paper)
- Organize styling (brochures etc.) to be done by a professional designer or alternatively make use of available staff's skills within your institution who may be able to do so.
- Agree on a planning that ends in the date of publication.

1.2. Communicate standards to customer

Active distribution of the standards benefits users and staff. The customers know what they can expect and the staff know that the customers are familiar with the quality standards.

There are several methods to enhance awareness of the standards:

- Use the institution house-style for the Charter lay-out. In brochures, billboards, etc. Use a professional service provider if need be. It is harder than it looks to convey a publicity message effectively.
- Actively publish the service standards at places where the service is being provided. Specify the standard each time when service is delivered, e.g. in the acknowledgement of receipt of a letter, on the reception desk, on the Internet, etc. Posting a simple pamphlet on a bulletin board or a placing brochure in a literature display attracts little attention.
- Staff should be instructed to actively make customers aware of the service standards. E.g. when privacy is an issue: 'would you prefer a little privacy?'
- Use various communicating modes E.g. talk-show, banners and website;
- Clearly state a contact person in respect of service standards (make sure the contact persons are familiar with the Charter);
- Display Charters at all key service points.

1.3 Communicate standards to staff members

Do not overlook your own organization! Familiarity by the staff with the Charter may be advanced by means of:

- Publish standards internally on placemats, trays, mugs, posters, institutional booklets or brochures, or beamed on screens in open places in

Offices/Ministries/Agencies (O/M/As) and Regional Councils (RCs);

- Make sure the standards cannot be missed by anyone. It is advised that Customer Service Charters be displayed prominently and regularly on the GRN intranet, as well as be lighted on the GRN-Websites;

1.4 Monitor and evaluate progress on the achievement of standards

- Organize registration of results (degree to which standards are being met). Review possible ICT applications;
- Write an Action Plan to ensure that results at operations level are on the agenda of regular progress meetings;
- Continue registering the times when standards are not met. It is important to discuss this in advance with the staff concerned;
- Do not refrain from registering because you wish to avoid hurting people's feelings. Registering the number of times the standards are not met after all is an element of professional operations management;
- Make the standards and corresponding results a fixed element of existing management reporting;
- Make sure there is periodic (external) communication to customer groups. For instance via customers annual report, free home delivery papers, or the website;
- Before the actual introduction, get commitment that statistics with regard to infractions of standards will be published regularly and publicly;
- Make sure the service standards from the Charter are included in focus group studies or customer satisfaction surveys in your organization;
- Top Management decides the date of the evaluation of the Customer charter.

1.5 Involve staff and keep the standards lively

Proper maintenance of the Charter requires transparency of responsibilities related to achieving the service standards at Top Management, Middle Management and operational levels. This includes – where feasible – optimum delegation of competencies to those working at operational levels. This generates job satisfaction and pride in the organization, and at the end of the day improved service.

To increase knowledge by staff:

- Ensure opportunities for feedback on the Charter in progress meetings;
- Inform staff on targets and provide updates;
- Use internal newsletters to display results graphically to show progress in terms of the standards. It motivates staff members when they see that top management appreciates the importance of the charter and is aware of all the work being done by those at operational levels;
- Ensure that the standards are an element in performance evaluations. The leading principle being that the results are not used to hold individual people to account. It is, however, standard operating procedure that employees (including staff interfacing with customers) are accountable as far as possible.

1.6. How to keep the charter vital

- Assign Customer Charter monitoring employee at the front desk. This is not a manager but a member of the reception desk staff. This job monitors the staffing levels and the degree to which standards are being met. When it gets crowded, extra staff can be called in and vice versa. The post holder also acts as role model offering customers apologies if Charter standards are not met.
- Organize training courses focusing on ‘customer-driven attitude’. Many complaints result from discourteous, unprofessional treatment. How do you apologize and offer compensation, as appropriate?
- Unannounced verification of standard compliance is another option. Mystery-guest surveys test overall quality levels of the service being provided. They help keeping Customer Charter issues in people’s minds.

2. HOW TO SUSTAIN CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

2.1 Timelines and Review Frequency

As a matter of principle the content and form of Customer Service Charters should be closely *aligned to the strategic themes and tactical thrust* of the contemporary National Development Plan, i.e. NPD5. Similarly it is advisable that their review be informed by the

outcome of the Review of the expiring National Development Plan at any given time; at two years interval or when need arises.

2.2 Living the Customer Service Charter

Customer Service Charters are neither an end in themselves nor an objective by itself. They are basic documents embodying the definition and description of the nature of public goods and services available. They are meant to empower the would-be beneficiaries of such to be able to hold the ‘handlers’ **accountable** and **answerable** during the transactional encounters with the clientele.

Herein lies the importance of living the Customer Service Charters. This denotes that the Charters should be made living documents in that their content need to be part of the daily operations and attitudes of the public institutions and the personnel employed therein. Likewise the would-be beneficiaries of public goods and services should be familiar with the provisions and prescriptions of the Customer Service Charters. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that the OPM through the Department Public Service Management developed an Action Plan aiming at *guiding how the Customer Service Charters should be lived by the stakeholders*.

2.3. Action Plan for Living the Charters

In this regard, it is suggested that in order to help the process of “Living the Charters” be realised in concrete practical terms the following actions and activities be undertaken:

2.3.1 **The ‘Orientation and Induction’** of new entrants to the public service or of recently recruited employees in the public service should mandatorily entail *a session on the essence and significance of Customer Service Charters* in the public service of Namibia.

2.3.2 Similarly the **Foundational Course** offered by the Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM) must include a *compulsory module* on Customer Service Charters in the public service of Namibia.

2.3.3 An Annual Award to the best O/M/A or RC in “Living the Charter”

4 Checklist on How to Implement a Customer Service Charter:

The introduction of Customer Charters is a project. It has defined starting and ending phases – being the drafting and launching thereof, respectively. From that moment on, the

Charter ceases to be a project and becomes a structural element of operations management. Make sure you communicate this in unambiguous terms, otherwise those responsible in your organization will feel that once the introduction of the Charter is complete their work is done. We know from experience that Charters – with service standards as key a component – tend to get forgotten very quickly. This is why the embedding of Charters and public service spirited work ethos in the organization must be rigorously organized in advance. Below are some of the actions to be considered when implementing Charters:

ACTION	ACTIVITIES/STEPS	RESPON SIBLE UNIT	COMP LETE
1. Publish with style	• Make an inventory of various formats. (brochures, letters, internet, flat screen, local paper) • Organize styling (brochures etc.) • Agree on a planning that ends publication date		
2.Communicate standards to customers	• Use the institution house-style for the Charter lay-out. • Publish the service standards at places where the service is being provided. • Instruct staff to actively make customers aware of the service standards. • Use various communicating modes E.g. talk-show, banner on your website; • State contact address in/with the standards (and ensure contact persons are familiar with the Charter).		

3. Communi cate standards to staff members	• Publication of the standards internally on placemats, trays, mugs, posters, institutional booklets or brochures, or beamed on screens in open places in (O/M/As) and (RCs). • Ensure the standards are not missed by anyone. Customer Service Charters displayed prominently and regularly on the GRN intranet and GRN-Websites.		
	•		
4. Involve staff and keep the standards lively	• Ensure feedback on the Charter in progress meetings. • Inform staff on targets and provide updates. • Use internal newsletters to display results graphically • Ensure that standards are an element in performance.		
5. Keep the Charter Vital	• Assign Customer Charter monitoring employee at the front desk. • Organize training courses focusing on ‘customer-driven attitude’. • Unannounced verification of standard compliance and mystery-guest surveys.		
6. Action Plan for Living the Charters	The process of “Living The Charters” be realised following activities be undertaken: • The ‘Orientation and Induction’ of new entrants to the public service. • Foundational Course offered by (NIPAM) must include a <i>compulsory module</i> on Customer • Annual Award to best OMA/RC		