

Prepared by:
Parkland County
Corporate Services
53109A HWY 779
T7Z 1R1

Contact:
780-968-8888
1-800-880-0858
www.parklandcounty.com



ONE PARKLAND SERVICE EXCELLENCE STRATEGY

ONE PARKLAND: POWERFULLY CONNECTED.

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Contents

Introduction.....3

Objectives.....4

Strategy Development.....5

Key Area of Focus: Culture.....6

Key Area of Focus: Process.....7

Key Area of Focus: Physical Design of County Offices.....8

Key Are of Focus: Technology.....9

Critical Success Factors.....10



Customer Service

"The assistance and advice provided by a company to those people who buy or use its products or services."

-Oxford Dictionary

Introduction

Parkland County Council and administration have identified opportunities for customer service improvements across the organization based on feedback from both internal and external stakeholders.

Parkland County has acknowledged that a strategy is required to improve customer relations and service, and to become leaders in local government in these areas. This One Parkland Service Excellence Strategy will help focus on customer service excellence and make it part of the day-to-day corporate culture. This Strategy will guide Parkland County in becoming a more efficient, effective and innovative organization.



Objectives

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

In June 2017, the Parkland County Long-Term Strategic Plan was adopted establishing vision and direction for current and future councils over the next 25 years. The One Parkland Service Excellence Strategy will be a key component in supporting the Strategic Plan.

Although this Strategy will be relevant in all aspects of the Strategic Plan, the Responsible Leadership Pillar specifically identifies customer service as one of its Guiding Principles (4.3). To improve customer service, all members of the Parkland County team must come together to harness collective knowledge, innovation and initiative in fulfilling three of the Strategic Plan's Broader Objectives:

"4.3 We ensure streamlined and modernized municipal operations and services, with a focus on customer service."

1. "Implementing and institutionalizing the "One Parkland" vision to support collaborative team efforts and continuous improvement."

2. "Establishing Parkland County as a customer-centric organization that views service delivery from the customer's perspective."

3. "Meeting statutory regulations, while remaining creative, flexible and adaptable to ensure the efficiency of operations."

Strategy Development

In January 2017, a steering committee was established and tasked with the development of this strategy. A review of best practices of our municipal partners was conducted along with extensive internal and external consultation. The outcomes are reflected in the overall direction of the strategy to help Parkland County take a holistic and well-rounded approach to improving customer service.



BEST PRACTICES REVIEW

- Conducted municipal tours in early 2017 to review customer service strategies, tools, implementation, and success. Tours included: Strathcona County, Leduc, Leduc County, Town of Oakville, Hamilton, Brantford, Region of Waterloo, Burlington, and St. Catharine's

EXTERNAL REVIEW

- Obtained public feedback through the Resident and Business Priorities Surveys in early 2017. Approximately 500 residents and 170 businesses participated
- Engagement with the Residents Panel through an open house and online feedback

INTERNAL REVIEW

- Conducted two sets of interviews with managers and front-line staff from each department within Parkland County to identify key pressure points and opportunities across the organization as well as provide feedback on the development of the Strategy

OUTCOMES

- Engagement and analysis with municipal partners indicated that there are clear and consistent best practices in municipal service delivery scalable to organizational size and maturity
- Emphasis was placed on key focus areas such as culture, process, physical design and technology

OUTCOMES

- 80% of residents and 84% of businesses which contacted County staff in the past year rated the service they received as "good" or "very good" or "excellent"
- Staff were recognized for being friendly and helpful
- Areas for improvement: taking action quickly and following through, referring customers to the correct individual, first contact resolution

OUTCOMES

- There is general support for increasing the level of customer service we provide
- The level of service we provide to one another internally has a direct impact on the end service provided to our customers
- Currently there isn't enough emphasis on providing good customer service amongst staff

Key Area of Focus

1. CULTURE

A collaborative environment where employees are empowered and have the tools and resources to deliver a high standard of customer service. Quality customer service will be achieved primarily through having well-trained and professional staff that ensure a consistent approach to service delivery.

CURRENT STATE

STRENGTHS

- Staff are friendly, courteous and believe in the value of customer service
- The initiation of the strategy is driven by senior leadership and Council

AREAS FOR GROWTH

- A corporate-wide customer service strategy and implementation plan does not formally exist
- Employees do not feel empowered to make customer service a priority
- Emphasis is lacking on internal customer service amongst staff
- Human resources are not aligned with priorities for a centralized customer service model
- Organization-wide **customer service standards** do not exist

FUTURE STATE

- Organization-wide support for customer service strategy and initiatives
- Dedicated and empowered staff that view service delivery from the customer's perspective (both internally and externally)
- Support for staff development: training, workshops, rewards and incentives
- Roles and responsibilities based on key competencies
- Corporate-wide implementation of customer service standards

Customer Service Standards:

The interaction between a business and its customers; measurable in terms of excellence, response, time, accessibility, delivery time and commitment.



Key Area of Focus

2. PROCESS

A centralized and integrated service delivery model that enables Parkland County to be more responsive, accountable and provide ease of access to services. Processes serve a purpose, are efficient and effective, and meet the needs and expectations of our customers.

CURRENT STATE

STRENGTHS

- Staff do their best with processes that currently exist
- A phased-in approach to process mapping has been initiated

AREAS FOR GROWTH

- A decentralized customer service model currently exists. Customers are required to know the internal structure of Parkland County; services are only provided according to areas of responsibility
- Reception areas across the organization are fragmented and provide unintegrated service delivery requiring customers to visit multiple locations for services
- Information sharing between departments and front-line staff is limited
- Most departments are closed over lunch

FUTURE STATE

- An integrated, centralized customer service model is established
- Processes are continuously mapped, streamlined and automated, where practical
- Customer Service Representatives receive all first contact inquiries.
- Customers are only referred to subject matter experts when necessary (**first contact resolution goal 80/20%**)
- Service is provided during the lunch hour

First Contact Resolution Goal 80/20%:

Properly addressing the customer's needs 80% of the first time they contact, thereby eliminating the need for follow-up with another point of contact



Key Area of Focus

3. PHYSICAL DESIGN OF COUNTY OFFICES

Parkland County's buildings, primarily the County Centre, support positive customer interactions and have welcoming environments. Visitors are greeted upon entry by professional and knowledgeable dedicated customer service staff.

CURRENT STATE

STRENGTHS

- There is adequate space in the County Centre front lobby for future improvements
- The County owns a beautiful municipal art collection
- All County buildings are clean, welcoming and beautifully maintained with flowers, mowed grass and seasonal decorations, etc.
- There are opportunities at other County outlets such as the Entwistle Pool and Tomahawk Shop for expansion of service delivery
- County Services Building (Enforcement Services): While the entrance is secure, it only allows for one customer to be served one at a time, and there is no private area for sensitive matters.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

- Customers must visit multiple locations for simple services
- County Centre: Foyer is in need of a more welcoming feel, lack of way-finding signage
- County Centre: There is a need for a break-out room(s) for handling sensitive matters.

FUTURE STATE

- Centralized customer service work area
- A welcoming environment with live plants and municipal art proudly displayed
- Safe and secure meeting spaces for sensitive or confidential customer matters
- Expanded services offered in other County offices such as the Tomahawk Shop or Entwistle Pool



Key Area of Focus

4. TECHNOLOGY

Scalable and integrated technologies in place that capture customer interactions, organize information and streamline processes to enhance customer service. Service excellence is supported by providing staff with current and easy to access relevant data and information.

CURRENT STATE

STRENGTHS

- The new website and intranet are excellent resources for sharing and receiving information for staff and customers as they are user-friendly, accessible and aesthetically pleasing
- Staff have access to a variety of technology and receive good support from Information Services

AREAS FOR GROWTH

- Technology does not exist for customer interactions, capture and data analysis
- An organizational-wide system does not exist for tracking interactions with customers
- A virtual **knowledge base** does not exist
- Online services offered are limited; payments cannot be accepted online

FUTURE STATE

- A holistic, corporate-wide approach applied to technology that allows for data analysis, benchmarking and process improvements
- Implementation of a customer relationship management software (or equivalent)
- Implementation of a virtual knowledge base that is accessible to all staff
- Enhancement of web-based self-serve options to address the growing demand for customers to serve themselves

Knowledge Base:

A technology which acts as a repository that all staff can draw from to provide consistent information to customers.





Critical Success Factors

Parkland County has identified five key areas of activity that will have a tremendous impact on how successfully we can meet our target objectives for the One Parkland Service Excellence Strategy.



1. LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Cultural change is required to move Parkland County to a customer-centric organization. This requires complete support from the leadership team, Executive Committee and Council, who are identified as project champions.

RISKS

- Changes in leadership
- Political changes
- Differences in priorities among leadership team
- Lack of buy-in and support from leadership team

MITIGATION

Ensure leadership team remains informed of development of the Strategy and implementation plan through the provision of ongoing workshops and opportunities for input. Work with any new members of Council or the leadership team to ensure understanding of the initiative.



2. STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN

Transitioning to a customer-centric centralized service delivery approach requires all stakeholders to have a good understanding of rationale and organizational priorities and share in the vision of a transformed organization.

RISKS

- Lack of awareness and buy-in from stakeholders
- Inadequate communication and engagement
- Inadequate focus on change management

MITIGATION

Ensure all stakeholders remain informed of the development and implementation of the Strategy through the provision of ongoing communication and engagement opportunities and the development of a change management strategy.



3. ADEQUATE RESOURCES

For customer service initiatives to be successful, adequate human and financial resources must be provided. The leadership team must be supportive of the reallocation of human and financial resources.

RISKS

- Changes in priorities that affect resource allocation
- Inability to obtain adequate human resources
- Limited financial resources

MITIGATION

Ensure all requests for resources are supported by clear justification through research and review. Ensure customer service projects and activities are integrated into the annual budget initiatives and business plan development.



4. SUPPORTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The right analytics tools and technologies must to be in place and integrated with the appropriate business systems in order to deliver the most value.

RISKS

- Technology is implemented without proper examination of integration with current systems
- Inadequate financial resources to support technology
- Staff does not utilize new technologies

MITIGATION

Continue to engage Information Services and other key stakeholders throughout the process to create a holistic approach to technology. Ensure there is sufficient training, support and resources allocated for successful implementation and maintenance



5. SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

An implementation plan will be developed as part of the application of the Strategy. This is not a single project; a phased-in approach will be required with a transformation of this magnitude. Many small and meaningful changes will culminate into a series of cultural shifts.

RISKS

- Implementation plan is too aggressive
- Implementation plan loses traction and fails to meet target time lines
- Components of the plan are implemented in the incorrect sequence

MITIGATION

Comprehensive research and review must be conducted and applied prior to implementation to ensure goals are realistic and attainable. Key performance indicators will be developed and reported on to measure success along the way.

