



Kano State Government of Nigeria

Guidelines for Implementing Service Charters

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Section One

Introduction

1.1 Background

In his 2012 (first year) budget presentation to Kano State House of Assembly, the Governor committed to good Service delivery when he said:

“...I will seize this opportunity to assure the good people of Kano State that this government will be transparent and accountable and will not tolerate any act of indiscipline, corruption, or embezzlement of public funds.”

Also in his Foreword to the Kano State Development Plan (KSDP), he said:

“...finally, the (State Development) plan has worked out the framework for necessary institutional reforms needed to instill discipline and efficiency including the monitoring of the programmes and projects to be implemented based on carefully worked out target outputs and outcomes.”

At the heart of Public Service Reforms in Kano State is the need to deliver services to the citizens of Kano State in a transparent manner.

To operationalize this vision and underscore its desire for a truly citizen-centred public service, Kano State Governor Engr. Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso in November 2012 appointed a Coordinator for SERVICOM in the State, under the Office of Secretary to Kano State with a mandate to develop a Service Charter policy and drive the policy of efficient service delivery and monitoring across MDAs in the State and Local Government in Kano State.

This document sets out broad guidelines for developing, monitoring and implementing Service Charters. It is designed primarily to assist management of MDAs, staff of Service Delivery Units (SDUs), staff of SERVICOM Office, members of Ministerial Service Charter Committees and frontline staff to gain deeper understanding and conversance with the dynamics of customer-centered service through setting and monitoring service standards and commitments contained in MDA's Service Charters.

1.2 Use of the Guidelines

The guidelines can be used in different ways, including:

- As a guide for developing MDA service charters, as well as for reviewing existing service charters.
- As a reference document for evaluating Service Charters and assessing the quality of standards set.
- As a guide for conducting stakeholder and service users' consultations.
- As a training tool for briefing all cadres of MDA staff.
- As a tool for monitoring and reporting on performance against commitments listed in the Service Charter.

Section Two

Principles Underlying Service Charters

2.1 Introduction

Certain key issues are fundamental to the effective development and implementation of Service Charters as tools for public service delivery improvement, accountability and citizen engagement in Kano State. Some of these are considered below.

2.2 Service Charters and Service Delivery

Service delivery is a two-way street: it involves a demand by the user or customer from a supplier, the service provider or government establishment. The goal of service delivery improvement is to enhance the quality of service that service users receive whilst enabling service providers to develop service delivery models that enhance customers' experience and satisfaction. Satisfaction is the outcome of the equation:

$$\textit{Satisfaction} = \textit{Experience} - \textit{Expectation}$$

In other words, satisfaction is the result of people's experience minus their expectation. That is, if a person's experience exceeds his expectation, he/she is easily satisfied, and vice versa. However, where people's expectation is already minimal, improved service delivery requires their expectations be raised and their experience improved for satisfaction to be realized. This essentially is the role that Service Charters are meant to play in the engagement between the citizen and a service provider.

2.2.1 What are Service Charters?

A Service Charter is a public document that informs clients about an MDA's services, outlines citizens' rights and responsibilities as well as relevant avenues for communication. It specifies standards of service delivery in the form of a series of commitments, entitlements or promises upon which customers can expect and demand quality service as a right; and to which they can have recourse when service fails.

Service Charters describe the service experience a customer can expect and contain key information about an MDA's service delivery approach and the

relationship the customer will have with the agency. A Charter has five basic elements:

- Descriptions: of the services provided by the MDA;
- Service pledges: describing the general quality of service delivery customers should expect, focusing on such elements as openness, fairness, courtesy, professionalism, etc;
- Service standards (or service delivery targets): for key aspects of service, such as timeliness, access and accuracy;
- Complaint and redress mechanisms: that clients can use when they feel standards have not been met; and
- Costs: fees for services with associated costs to customers and stakeholders.

2.2.2 Why Service Charters?

Customers and the public are entitled to be told the level, range and quality of services they are to receive. Apart from practically demonstrating government's resolve to make services accountable to citizens, Service Charters provide customers, staff and stakeholders for the first time, with:

- A set of key services that an MDA provides to its customers and stakeholders;
- A central resource where customers and stakeholders can find the information about an MDA's key services in one place;
- Clear, consistent information that is accessible and easy to find;
- Clear statements about customers and stakeholders' obligation in providing complete and accurate information so that public employees can serve them more effectively; and
- The means by which services, and the delivery of service standards, can be monitored and evaluated.

2.2.3 Who must produce a Service Charter?

All Government MDAs in Kano State are required to develop Service Charters in consultation with staff, customers/service users and stakeholders. A line ministry will have a comprehensive *Integrated Charter* covering the services of its Parastatals and agencies. Each agency or Parastatal is also expected to produce a *Local Charter* of its own services. In addition, every service unit should develop and display standards for services it renders to the public.

2.2.4 Who should take part in developing a Service Charter?

The following groups of people have vested interests in the successful implementation of an MDA's Service Charter and therefore should actively participate in its development and implementation:

- Management and staff of MDAs, comprising: Commissioners, Chief Executives, Permanent Secretaries, Directors/Heads of Departments, MDA Charter Committee members, Service Delivery Officer and staff of Service Delivery Unit, and all other employees of the MDA.
- Customers or users of services, comprising: members of the public; staff of other MDAs; members of the community, industry and other groups; or citizens in the diaspora.
- Stakeholders, comprising: community and civil society groups; other MDAs; and any other institutions, agencies, business groups, or individuals that have an interest in the success of the MDA.
- Legislators of the State House of Assembly and other members of the political class.

2.2.5 Responsibilities of parties in preparing Service Charters

- a) MDA management is to champion the Service Charter by:
- Initiating robust discussion of purpose and workings of Charters at top management meetings;
 - Adequately supporting the Charter Committee by ensuring appointment of competent staff and providing required financial resources;
 - Communicating with staff about the need for Service Charters;
 - Ensuring that the process is linked to the wider business planning process within the MDA and that Service Charter aligns with other accountability mechanisms of the MDA, such as budget statements, annual reports, strategic plans, sector strategies/expenditure frameworks;
 - Establishing a Service Charter Committee for the MDA;
 - Ensuring that customers and stakeholders are involved in development, monitoring, review and reporting of standards contained in Service Charter.

- b) Staff of MDA should:
- Have a good understanding of the information in the sections that directly apply to their jobs/departments, especially relating to the standards and commitments to customers and stakeholders;
 - Be conversant with, and knowledgeable about all sections of their Service Charter and be able to competently communicate same to customers and stakeholders;
 - Be open and willing to receive complaints from customers and be conversant with MDA's Complaint Handling and Grievance Redress Mechanism;
 - Monitor implementation to ensure the delivery of services is in line with the commitments and standards set out in the Service Charter, and of remedial action where standards are not being met.
- c) Customers and stakeholders must be:
- Ready to continuously challenge staff of MDAs to increasingly higher levels of service provision by demanding and insisting on commitments made in Service Charters;
 - Willing to participate actively and regularly in MDA's consultation forums as well as in monitoring and reviewing the standards contained in service charters;
 - Able to provide required information accurately and fulfil other prerequisites to effective service delivery as contained in Service Charter.
- d) SERVICOM Office Kano State (and Service Charters Task Team) is responsible for:
- Providing support, advice and guidance in the development of Service Charter and, where necessary, in the training of relevant staff;
 - Undertaking periodic monitoring and evaluation of MDA compliance with service standards, including complaints handling standards; and reporting outcomes as appropriate;
 - Ensuring effective resolution of complaints by facilitating continuing engagement of aggrieved customers with MDAs.

2.2.6 The Service Charter Committee

The Service Charter Committee is to be composed as follows:

- Permanent Secretary – Chair;
- Heads of Departments;
- 1 other representative from every Department
- Service Charter Desk Officer – Member/Secretary
- SERVICOM Office Kano State (and Service Charters Task Team)
- Representative of Corporate Planning Task Team²
- Representatives of frontline staff
- 1 Representative of Staff Associations/Unions;
- Representatives of key customers
- 2 Representatives of stakeholders/partners
- 2 Representatives of Civil Society Organizations

It is important that membership of this committee be drawn from the various Departments, Divisions and Units making up the MDA. Each Departmental representative is to serve as a liaison between the department/division/unit and the Charter Committee to ensure that all MDA staff, especially frontline staff are carried along and their views reflected. Involvement of frontline staff is essential as they have firsthand interaction and experience with customers. The committee proceeds along the following steps in developing the MDA Service Charter:

- a. Articulate mission and vision statements for the MDA;
- b. Resolve MDAs mandate overlaps through Round Table Discussions (RTD);
- c. Identify and list all customers, stakeholders and partners of the MDA in consultation with other staff;
- d. Identify and list all services and products of the MDA in consultation with other staff;
- e. Determine current level and quality of services provided by the MDA;
- f. Prepare proposed list of service delivery targets (standards) of all core services provided by the MDA taking cognizance of level of human and material resources and other MDA circumstances;

- g. Conduct Stakeholders' Consultation meeting involving officers and staff of the MDA;
- h. Prepare 1st draft Service Charter and circulate same amongst various customers, stakeholders, management and staff for comments/suggestions;
- i. Validate and adopt draft Service Charters;
- j. Submit final draft for approval and sign-off by Hon. Commissioner of the MDA in focus;
- k. Submit approved copy of Service Charter to Coordinator SERVICOM Kano State for endorsement;
- l. Arrange for Publication and public launch of the Charter.

The launch should normally involve a public ceremony by no less than the Commissioner, to which customers, stakeholders and public are invited. It could also involve road-shows and other publicity campaigns. But it is essential that the Charter is available in various forms: website, media, posters, leaflets, digital displays, etc. in addition to pasting abridged versions in reception area of every service window and in all service units, state-wide.

Section Three

The Customer Service Charter

3.1 Basic Attributes of a Customer Service Charter

Essentially, a Service Charter should be:

- **Simple**

A Service Charter is intended to be read and understood by ordinary customers, members of staff and stakeholders. It should be written in simple, straightforward and plain language, to the point, and devoid of legal jargon.

- **Meaningful**

A Service Charter should be meaningful to the individuals using the service. It should relate to aspects of the service which customers find important. In other words, it should be responsive and cover elements of service that are relevant and visible, such as:

- what the MDA does;
- how to contact and communicate with the MDA;
- the standard of service customers can expect;
- customers' basic rights and responsibilities;
- How to provide feedback or make a complaint.

- **Realistic**

Service Charter promises should be attainable yet challenging, consistent with MDA objectives and based on surveys and analyses. It should be realistic, promising only what can be delivered. Do not promise what you cannot provide in your Charter. It is better to under-promise and over-deliver than vice versa.

- **Based on Consultation**

Service Charters are in effect social 'pacts' between service providers and service users and therefore should be developed in consultation with customers, staff and other stakeholders, bearing in mind the organization's mandate and resources.

- **Available**
Unless published, Service Charters are worthless and meaningless. They should be published and made widely available to staff, customers and stakeholders.
- **Monitored, Reviewed and Updated**
Service Charters should be an essential management tool in service delivery and the standards owned by MDA managers and staff alike. MDAs should monitor and measure their performance against the standards promised in Charters, and conduct customer surveys to determine the levels of satisfaction with the service provided give, as well as to adequately provide feedback. The standards contained in Charters should be reviewed regularly and adjusted to reflect new circumstances so as to continually improve the cost effectiveness of service delivery.

3.2 Essential Components of a Service Charter

To be relevant and meaningful, a Service Charter should contain the following minimum elements:

- i) Introduction/Background
 - a) Description of the organization's mandate
 - b) Statement of the purpose of the Charter document
- ii) Vision Statement
 - a) An inspirational statement of desired future that the organization aims to attain through its services
 - b) Could have a timeframe (optional)
- iii) Mission Statement
 - a) The mission statement should clearly but briefly state the purpose/objectives of the MDA and how it will achieve this
- iv) Details of Customers
 - a) A comprehensive list of customers or clients.
- v) Service Provision and Delivery
 - a) List of services provided by the MDA

- b) Statement of specific standards which customers can expect from each service listed
- c) Standards of service should include:
 - Quality of relationship with customer, e.g. friendliness, helpfulness, respect, courtesy, impartiality
 - Quality of service provision, e.g. clarity, accuracy, responsiveness, availability
 - Timeliness of service delivery, e.g. promptness, speed of response to clients (correspondences, telephones, processing applications/licenses, booking appointments, waiting times)
- d) Special Needs Provision
 - Take into consideration customers with special needs e.g. elderly, blind, disabled, pregnant women, children, etc.
- e) Clear description of performance monitoring and reporting arrangement
- vi) Complaints/Grievance Redress Mechanism
 - a) Clear statement of MDA assurance on feedback to convey that MDA welcomes complaints, compliments, suggestions
 - b) Clear explanation of procedure for complaints
 - How to make a complaint, who to complain to including relevant postal, email addresses, and phone numbers. Include options (e.g. in person, comment card) and time limit to address complaint
 - How to give feedback specifically about the Charter itself;
 - That the feedback and complaints handling process is accessible, easy to use and free
 - That the agency records data on complaints, compliments and suggestions and this is used to help improve client service;
 - c) Available redress (e.g. apology, repeat service, refund, etc)
- vii) Customers' Obligations
 - a) Clear and reasonable statement of what is expected of customers
 - to provide necessary information,
 - attend scheduled meetings,
 - comply with legal requirements, etc.

- viii) Stakeholders' participation
 - a) Method and frequency of participation
- ix) Existing Limitations (if any)
 - a) Clear explanation of existing limitations and how these may affect the achievement of promised level of service provision.
- x) Review
 - a) The Service Charter should be a living document that evolves in line with changes that occur within the MDA. This means that MDAs must regularly review their Service Charter as improvements are made on practices, processes and procedures to ensure its ongoing relevance and effectiveness. Issues to consider include:
 - whether the service commitments and standards are still relevant, realistic or challenging
 - whether the current content is accurate (e.g. change in name, mandate, profile, contact details or other information earlier provided)
 - frequency of review (annually or every two years)

3.3 What makes a good Service Charter?

A good Customer Service Charter should:

- Focus on customer requirements;
- Be communicated in simple, plain language;
- Contain SMART service delivery targets (standards);
- Involve staff, customers and stakeholders;
- Ensure effective delegation to frontline staff;
- Contain feedback mechanism;
- Provide realistic remedies for complaints;
- Provide for close monitoring by MDA and stakeholders;
- Undergo periodic and regular review.

Section Four

Developing and Implementing Service Charters

The process of developing and implementing a Service Charter should form part of a continuous service improvement strategy. As the quality of service provision improves and becomes more efficient, the Charter and the standards promised therein should be reviewed and revised in line with customer feedback.

4.1 Steps in Developing Service Charters

The key steps to consider when developing a Service Charter and establishing service delivery standards include:

- Defining the MDA's business;
- Organizing and facilitating stakeholders' consultations;
- Setting the service standards; and
- Communicating the service standards and Service Charter commitments publicly.

These steps are explained in greater detail below.

4.1.1 Defining MDA's Business

This involves describing the business and mandate of the MDA. Activities include:

- a) *Articulating the MDA's vision and Mission statement:* Concise statements about the MDA's mandate and how it intends to achieve it (mission); and the expected future to which the organization aspires when the mission has been achieved (vision).
- b) *Identifying and segmenting the MDA's customers:* Customers are individuals, groups and businesses who have dealings with the MDA. They may be internal (staff), external (public) or intra-governmental (other MDA), who are either directly or indirectly, the recipients of the services of the MDA. To avoid excluding any groups, customers should be segmented using different profile characteristics including: age, ethnicity, religion, ability/disability, gender, socio-economic status, occupation, etc. Representatives of key customer segments are to be

involved in the development and implementation of Service Charter to ensure the standards of service being delivered meet their needs.

- c) *Identifying the MDA's partners and stakeholders:* Increasingly, government services are often being delivered in partnership with other departments in the state, other tiers of government (Federal and Local Government), the private sector and even international agencies. A comprehensive listing of these partners and the nature of their interaction with the MDA will be compiled. Identifying and understanding these types of arrangements and involving them in Service Charter development helps to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, whilst providing a more joined-up service to the customer.
- d) *Itemizing and listing the MDA's services:* This is not a schedule of duty. The key to identifying services is to identify the various interactions or dealings the MDA has with the public (Kano State residents, businesses, organizations and others having contacts with the state government).
- e) *Linking services to MDA's Strategic Plan and objectives:* All MDAs are delivering services to meet the goals of Kano State Development Plan and, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Service Charters therefore, are to illustrate the linkages between the provisions of services by the MDAs to the core objectives of these development strategies. With the State Development Plan completed and on-going preparation of Medium Term Sector Strategies in MDAs in Kano State, it is imperative that effective linkages are maintained between the preparation of Service Charters and KSDP and MTSS.
- f) *Undertaking a review of current service delivery to establish a baseline of what is being done:* The monitoring and review of service delivery is an integral element of the planning process and is to be an ongoing activity in order to determine and improve upon the quality of services offered by the MDA. Assessment of current performance, resources, as well as customer satisfaction with present levels of service delivery, is necessary to develop realistic and meaningful service delivery targets.

4.1.2 Organizing and Facilitating Stakeholder Consultations

MDAs are to engage in regular and systematic consultation with existing and potential customer groups about the services being provided, and about any service standards being proposed. By obtaining the views of customers, MDAs can better understand their needs and expectations and ensure that policies and services reflect, and are responsive to, customer needs. Consultation processes need to be planned and managed well. Having adequately defined the MDA's business, the Service Charter Committee is in a position to conduct stakeholders' consultation.

It is important that the MDA clarifies ahead what will be done with the results of the consultation process. Clear lines of action need to be established so that the outcome are used to effect change. Without such channels, stakeholders will feel that their input is not valued and will cease to engage with the process, and MDAs will lose an opportunity to improve services.

The method(s) of consultation chosen is also very important and should be determined by the characteristics of customers, as well as the MDA's resources and capabilities. Whatever method(s) are used, the process should be inclusive and representative of the full range of customers. The following are some useful consultation methods:

- a) *Customer Surveys*: Questionnaire-based surveys allow organisations to get views from a widely representative group of users and can give statistically reliable information. It also allows organisations to assess progress and compare information from one year to another if the same questions are asked. In order to ensure that customer surveys are a meaningful and useful exercise, it is important that they are:
 - Consistent, in methodology, reliability and frequency;
 - Independently undertaken, where possible;
 - Focused on the key issues, including key drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction;
 - Published results, which are seen to be used to design customer services.

- b) *Customer Panels:* Customer panels involve customers meeting the organisation to express their opinions on the services they received.
- c) *Focus Groups:* Focus groups are normally made up of approximately 6 - 10 people led by a trained facilitator in a one-off discussion focused on a particular topic.
- d) *Complaints/Comments Systems:* These offer customers an immediate channel for comments, complaints and suggestions regarding the service they received. The primary purpose of the comment card is to provide information to staff quickly so that operational problems can be corrected as soon as possible. Similarly, complaints are a potential source of very useful quantitative and qualitative data on customer perceptions and opinions.
- e) *Public Meetings:* These meetings might be arranged for members of the public to find out about, and enable them express their views on a particular issue.
- f) *Mystery Shopping:* Mystery Shopping might be used to assess the quality of services by pretending to be a customer.

4.1.3 Setting Customer-sensitive Service Standards

Having consulted with staff, customers and stakeholders, MDAs will have a clearer picture of customer expectations to enable them develop standards which are relevant, appropriate and meet identified needs. Development of service standards will be guided by the four fundamental service qualities of:

- a) *Timeliness:* time required to complete the service transaction.
- b) *Accessibility:* availability of a service to a customer. It includes the number of contacts, locations, or people involved in completing the service transaction; hours of operation; clear language (both spoken and written); reception experience, convenience, ease of access; and the number of service delivery methods available (such as telephone, mail, visits or electronic methods).
- c) *Reliability:* the quality of information provided during service transactions. How do customers perceive the knowledge and

competence of the staff? Do they get correct answers? Is information consistent from one employee to another? Do staff protect customers' confidentiality?

- d) *Responsiveness*: the way the service transaction is handled. It includes ability of staff to communicate clearly and easily; courtesy and helpfulness; understanding of customers' needs; and ability to handle diversity and cater for customers with special needs.

Although Service Charters grow from these fundamental service qualities, service standards must be more precise and specific, i.e. SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic/Relevant, Time bound). An example of a SMART service standard might be: *'To acknowledge receipt of all written correspondence within 3 working days of receipt and to issue a substantive response within 15 working days.'* To be SMART, service standards must:

- relate to those aspects of the service transaction that are important to customers;
- be clear to the customer, for example "... We will do...in five days..." vs. "... We will do...in five *working* days...". 'Five working days' is clearer than just 'five days'.
- be meaningful to the client, for example "we will serve 85 per cent of our clients in 20 minutes." vs "we will serve you in 25 minutes or less". 'We will serve you in 25 minutes' is more meaningful than 'we will serve 85% of our customers in 25 minutes'. Otherwise, the customer is left wondering whether s/he is among the 85% served in 25 minutes or the 15% who get served anytime beyond (or not served at all!)
- be measurable. How else will you know if you are achieving them? for example "we will serve you promptly." vs. "we will serve you in 25 minutes or less". '25 minutes is more measurable than simply 'promptly'.
- be short and simple . These will be more effective than long, convoluted ones, for example "we will process your claim in five working days". vs. "we will process your claim in three days, unless one of those days falls on a weekend, in which case we will normally process your claim in five

days". Using 'working days' removes the need for explanations and the attendant convolution, since weekends are normally work-free.

4.1.4 Communicating Service Charter Commitments

- a) *Make communication clear and effective:* To be effective, communication must capture the audience's attention and be easy to understand. Use "plain language." Write standards using words and language that are familiar to customers. Pilot test them to determine how well customers understand and receive them.
- b) *Build upon current communication methods:* How are you communicating with customers now? Use those methods to start communicating your service standards and performance against the standards. Building on existing methods also reduces the costs of a Service Charter communication strategy. Identify all current communication methods currently in use. These may include posters, pamphlets, brochures, newspapers, circulars, videos, audio tapes, telephones, meetings, letters, mail outs, press releases, ministerial speeches, internal newsletters, training sessions, orientation packages, e-mail, bulletin boards and suggestion boxes. Then determine which of these are cost-effective ways to publicize your Service Charter and the MDA's performance against the standards contained. Always look for innovative and cost-effective ways to communicate with customers, taking into account their characteristics and needs.
- c) *Determine how you are going to communicate the various elements of service standards to your customers:* Service Charters have five elements. Different communication methods may be appropriate for different elements of the Charter. For example, a pamphlet may be used to describe the services available and a poster to publicize service standards and complaint mechanisms. The important thing is that customers must have ready access to all the elements and that MDA reports on its performance against the standards.
- d) *Make service standards (delivery targets) and complaint mechanisms clearly visible:* It is sensible to link service descriptions with the other

aspects of the Charter. However, it is very important that customers can focus on the service standards, such as timeliness and complaint mechanisms. Avoid distracting customers with long descriptions of the services themselves.

- e) *Prepare a long-term communication strategy:* Communication about Service Charters and performance against the standards promised therein is a long-term process. Although news releases and public speeches of Chief Executives are good forums, communication of service standards and performance against them must be made readily available to customers on an ongoing basis and must be made part of regular communication with them. The communication strategy should include a long-term action plan for keeping customers informed. Below are some suggested communication methods:
- Posters in public and other offices (for both customers and staff);
 - Leaflets that can be sent to customers along with routine correspondence and made available in public offices;
 - Website – display the Service Charter prominently on the MDA’s website, at a minimum a link to the Charter from the home page and any other page focused on customer service;
 - Emails - a link to the Charter could be included at the foot of emails;
 - Pledge Cards - small wallet-sized cards with the main customer service commitments and contact details;
 - Press release/launch - for MDAs with a substantial customer base, attracting press interest to the launch of the Service Charter should be considered;
 - Meetings with customers, collectively or individually to inform them of the Service Charter orally or by handing out leaflets;
 - Awareness and sensitization campaigns and training programmes, workshops to re-orientate and motivate officers and staff of the MDA and familiarize them with the commitments made in the Charter;

- Speaking Opportunities can be used to outline the main elements of the Charter;
 - Publications - other publications on customer service could incorporate the Service Charter;
 - Advertising - national, state, local, trade and special interest publications could be considered.
 - Internal Dissemination:
 - Disseminate widely throughout MDA (every staff must have a copy)
 - Sensitize all categories of staff
 - Train and empower frontline staff
- f) *Publish and Launch Service Charter*: Examples of ways to communicate the launch are:
- managing an external media campaign (e.g. local press, TV, radio);
 - including articles in relevant MDA bulletins and other publications;
 - Including articles in relevant customer/stakeholder publications.

Section Five

Managing MDA Based on Service Charter Standards

5.1 Introduction

Service standards are an integral part of good management, and it is expected that MDAs will be managed in consistent and supportive ways that motivate employees to provide good customer service. Setting customer-driven standards and measuring how well the MDA is doing is a continuous process. It enables quick identification of problems with customer service. All parts of the MDA should be involved in finding solutions to these problems and discussing these solutions with customers and stakeholders.

MDA managers should:

- clarify and agree on performance measures;
- develop ways to measure performance against standards, and monitor performance constantly;
- empower front-line staff – equip staff with the skills and tools to deliver effective services
- ensure that staff are trained in consultation, collaborative behaviour and quality management;
- take visible, credible steps that demonstrably rewards quality customer service;
- communicate good practices to staff;
- accept well-intentioned errors by subordinates who take new risks in service innovation as learning opportunities;
- regularly monitor the service performance of their units;
- know whether content, value and method of delivery of the services meet customers' needs; and
- use performance and customer satisfaction information to guide operational decisions and continually improve their service standards and actual performance.

Effective implementation of Service Charters involves:

- a) Monitoring, evaluating and reporting MDA's performance against promised standards;

- b) Acting on lessons learnt by reviewing the Charter standards regularly; and
- c) Putting in place an effective Complaints and Feedback machinery

These are examined in greater detail below.

5.2 Monitoring and Evaluation of Service Charter

It is critically important that the Charter evaluation system is congruent with MDA's broader performance management system. Thus, the standards in the charter should not be different from those of individual officials as per their job description or as set out in their departmental indicators. Issues to consider include:

- Evaluation should take place regularly, at least twice a year. Ideally, this should be supported by easy-to-use, electronic, performance monitoring systems so that data can be analyzed in real-time and reports on service failure against the charter standards can be generated automatically. In the absence of this, SERVICOM Office Kano State will maintain and regularly update a database of all reports and activities including monitoring and evaluation, on their website which should be interactive. Every MDA will have access to their own pages on the website through which their profiles, etc can be updated. In addition, regular reporting and publishing of evaluation results (both scheduled evaluation and mystery shopping) and follow-up will keep MDAs on their toes on the need to improve service delivery performance.
- The SERVICOM Index Compliance Evaluation provides a useful tool to evaluate performance against Service Charter standards. SERVICOM Office Kano State staff as well as SDU officials will need to be trained on the use of the Index. Other forms of evaluation, such as exit polls for user groups and surveys and feedback forms also give a good indication of the quality of services.
- The MDA Service Charter Committee should set up a Monitoring and Evaluation Sub-committee to monitor and evaluate service delivery performance against standards on a regular basis and report to Charter Committee as appropriate.

- Data relating to performance of the organisation vis-à-vis commitments made in the Service Charter should be published in the Annual Report and other public reporting instruments and shared with customers/stakeholders using appropriate media. This ensures openness and accountability so that an ongoing relationship with customers, stakeholders and staff of the MDA is maintained.
- Evaluation must be conducted both internally and externally from a customer perspective so as to monitor the level of customer awareness of the Charter.
- Finally, evaluation must provide a reward system for staff who provide excellent service.

5.3 Charter Review and Promotion

The Service Charter should be a living document that evolves in line with changes that occur within the MDA and that affect customers. Such changes may include improvements in standards; change in MDA's profile, mandate and/or priorities; changes in response to stakeholders' consultation or complaints/feedback; etc. Therefore, MDAs must regularly review their Charters to ensure its ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

- How frequently should Charter be reviewed?
Charters should be reviewed on a regular basis. It is suggested that MDAs review their Charter at least every two years.
- Need for Consultation in review.
To be open and accountable, MDAs should consult with customers and stakeholders during the review process.
- Maintaining and Promoting the Service Charter
Once the review has been completed and the Service Charter revised and updated, it is important to put in place modality for promoting the Charter to customers, stakeholders and staff. Towards this end, MDAs should:
 - Develop communications strategy to raise awareness of the changes identified in the review process;
 - Make the revised version of the Charter available to all staff, customers and stakeholders;

- Make the revised Charter available at all customers' contact points;
- Post the Charter on the MDA's web site.

5.4 Putting in Place Effective Complaints and Feedback Machinery

Customer complaints are one of the most available and yet underutilized sources of customer and stakeholder information. In simplest terms, a complaint is a statement about expectations that have not been met. It is also, and perhaps more importantly, an opportunity for an MDA to satisfy a dissatisfied customer by fixing a service or product breakdown. In this way, a complaint is a gift customers give to a business. The MDA will benefit from opening this package carefully and seeing what is inside. MDAs should bear in mind that:

- Most dissatisfied customers do not complain. The average business does not hear from 96% of its unhappy customers;
- For every complaint received there will be many more customers with problems, and some of these problems will be serious;
- People do not register their complaint, not always because they think it's not worth the time and effort, but usually because they do not know *how, where, or to whom* to complain, or they believe that the MDA would be indifferent to their complaints.

5.4.1 Designing and Implementing Effective Complaints Handling System

Without a good complaint system, Service Charters have no effect. MDAs should establish highly credible and responsive complaints procedures and grievance redress systems. Before anyone can make a complaint, s/he needs to have certain information. This includes rights and responsibilities. People should be told not only what their rights are as receivers of public service, but also their responsibilities. This is best done best through a clear statement provided in the Service Charter. A complaint system should:

- Be easily accessible and well publicized;
- Be simple to understand and use;
- Be speedy, with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of progress;
- Be fair, comprehensive and impartial in its investigation;

- Be confidential, to maintain the confidentiality of both the staff and the complainant;
- Be informative, providing information to top management so that services can be improved;
- Set out clearly the volume of complaints, broken down by different categories;
- Include an analysis of response time;
- Inform the complainant of the proposed action.

Basic Steps for Effective Complaints Management

- i) Acknowledge complaints;
- ii) Designate a location to receive complaints;
- iii) Develop a system for record keeping;
- iv) Process and record complaints;
- v) Investigate and analyze the complaints;
- vi) Keep the customer informed of the progress;
- vii) Periodically analyze the complaints and improve the process.

How to Complain?

This means giving names, addresses and phone numbers of the MDA's Service Delivery/Service Improvement/Complaint Officer. Time targets for responding should be stated for:

- Acknowledging complaints;
- Responding to complaints;
- Keeping people informed if the response target cannot be met and explaining the reasons for the same;
- The possible outcome - the information should state what redress people can expect when they have a complaint.

Redress Options

A recommended menu of redress options could be:

- An apology;
- An explanation;
- Assurance that the same thing will not happen again, backed up by action and monitoring;
- Action taken to put things right;

- Financial compensation.

5.4.2 Publishing Complaints Information

Publishing complaints information ensures accountability and transparency. It demonstrates to the public that complaints are taken seriously and it is worthwhile to complain. The MDA must publish information on complaints received at least once a year and should include:

- Numbers and types/categories of complaints;
- Speed of response to the complaints received;
- Action taken as a result of complaints to improve services.

Minimum level of detail to be recorded about complaints received should include:

- Name, address and telephone number of the complainant;
- Date of receipt;
- Details of the complaint, subject or issue;
- What redress the person wants;
- Immediate action to be taken on the complaint.

This information should be collated and submitted to the Service Delivery Units on a regular basis.

5.4.3 The Role of IT

Information Technology has given an added feature to the way in which information can be stored in MDAs. This could be addressed in the planned ICT Policy. The data on complaints can be stored with ease and accessed without tedious record maintenance. The database becomes accessible to every level of the administration and redress is also possible more effectively and quickly. This facilitates recording and tracking complaints and reporting on complaint handling and grievance redress.

Appendix One

Service Charter ('back end document) Template

1. **INTRODUCTION:** Description of the organization's mandate
2. **PURPOSE:** Statement of the purpose of the Service Charter document
3. **VISION:** An inspirational statement of desired future that the organization aims to attain through its services.
4. **MISSION:** The mission statement should clearly but briefly state the purpose/objectives of the MDA and how it will achieve these
5. **CUSTOMERS:** A comprehensive list of customers or clients

6. SERVICE PROVISION AND DELIVERY

List of services provided	Standards of service to be delivered

7. **SPECIAL NEEDS PROVISION:** What consideration is given to customers with special needs e.g. elderly, blind, cripple, pregnant women, children, etc.
8. **MONITORING & REPORTING:** clear description of systems put in place for monitoring and reporting performance all against standards.
9. **WHERE TO FIND US:** Key contact details; postal or street address, phone, fax, email and Web address; Hours of opening; Online services, or other electronic services.
10. **COMPLAINTS HANDLING AND GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM:** Clear explanation of procedure for complaints and grievance redress including standards that customers should expect; assurance that MDA records data on complaints, compliments and suggestions and this is used to help improve client service.

11. **CUSTOMER'S OBLIGATIONS:** Clear and reasonable statement of what is expected of customers.
12. **STAKEHOLDERS' PARTICIPATION:** Method and frequency of participation
13. **EXISTING LIMITATIONS (if any):** Clear explanation of existing limitations and how these may affect the achievement of promised level of service provision.
14. **REVIEW:** How frequently the charter will be reviewed e.g. annually or every two years.

Appendix Two

Service Charter (Public Facing Document) Template

1. **INTRODUCTION:** Description of the organization’s mandate
2. **PURPOSE:** Statement of the purpose of the Service Charter document
3. **VISION:** An inspirational statement of desired future that the organization aims to attain through its services.
4. **MISSION:** The mission statement should clearly but briefly state the purpose/objectives of the MDA and how it will achieve these

5. SERVICE PROVISION AND DELIVERY

Standards of service to be delivered including special needs provision

6. **MONITORING & REPORTING:** clear description of systems put in place for monitoring and reporting performance all against standards.
7. **WHERE TO FIND US:** Key contact details; postal or street address, phone, fax, email and Web address; Hours of opening; Online services, or other electronic services.
8. **COMPLAINTS HANDLING AND GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM:** Clear explanation of procedure for complaints and grievance redress including

standards that customers should expect; assurance that MDA records data on complaints, compliments and suggestions and this is used to help improve client service.

9. **STAKEHOLDERS' PARTICIPATION:** Method and frequency of participation
10. **REVIEW:** How frequently the charter will be reviewed e.g. annually or every two years.

Appendix Three

Service Charter Evaluation Checklist (Also to be used as guide for Customer consultation)

MDA: -----

SERVICE WINDOW (Unit/ Dept./Agency): -----

CONTENT	YES	NO	N.A.	CLARITY			REALISM			COMMENTS
				1	2	3	1	2	3	
1. Introduction / Background i. Purpose of the Charter is described ii. Services of the MDA are described										
2. Mission Statement i. The Mandate of the MDA is clearly indicated ii. Expected service provision is indicated										
3. Vision Statement i. Statement of Long term goals for service provision and a desired future state an organization strives for ii. Timeframe attached (optional)										

<p>4. Service Provision and delivery</p> <p>i. Clear statement of customer expectations</p> <p>ii. Standard of service provision and delivery is included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt and courteous treatment of customers • Information and consultation with customers <p>iii. Clear description of how set standards on service delivery will be monitored and published</p>											
<p>5. Special Needs Provision</p> <p>i. The Organization has itemized specific provision for people with special needs e.g. the elderly, physically challenged, Pregnant women, children etc</p> <p>ii. Translations into various languages</p>											

<p>6. Complaints /Grievance Redress Mechanism</p> <p>i. There is a clear explanation of this mechanism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who to complain to • time limits for response • list of redress available e.g. apology, compensation, repeated service, refund 										
<p>7. Obligations</p> <p>i. There is clear statement of what is expected of staff, customers and management for effective service to be provided</p> <p>ii. These obligations are reasonable</p>										
<p>8. Stakeholders Participation</p> <p>i. Clearly describes the manner and frequency of stakeholders participation i.e. regular consultation</p>										
<p>9. Existing Limitations</p> <p>i. There is a clear explanation of how existing limitations and constraints affect the achievement of the Mission & Vision statement</p>										
<p>10. Review of Charter</p> <p>i. Date of next review</p> <p>ii. How regularly Charter is reviewed</p>										

Overall Evaluation									
i. Other essential ingredients missing in the charter									
TOTAL SCORES									

DATE EVALUATED	SERVICOM	Kano	State	EVALUATOR'S SIGNATURE
CERTIFIED FOR PUBLICATION BY				

1 – UNSUITABLE

2 – FAIR

3 – GOOD.

Appendix Four

Stakeholder Consultation Guidelines

Introduction

Stakeholder consultation is about putting the people who are affected by certain issues or particular decisions clearly in the picture, asking them about their needs, listening to their views and making sure the outcomes are communicated to those involved. Consultation will assist in the planning, delivery and monitoring of better services and products. Consultation should be part of best practice and an ongoing process, not just a once-off event.

Why consult?

Consultation is a two way process and both parties involved stand to benefit.

- By obtaining the views of customers, MDAs can better understand their needs and expectations and therefore ensure that policies and services reflect, and are responsive to, customer needs.
- It helps MDAs plan services better to give customers what they want and expect
- It helps MDAs prioritize their services and make better use of resources and
- It helps build up a rapport between MDAs and their customers.
- It engenders cooperation which in turn engenders customer ownership of ideas and initiatives geared towards solving knotty, critical, or controversial issues
- Helps to identify opportunities for partnership and collaboration;
- provides information and receiving objective feedback which help reduce mistakes, disruptions and costly modifications to process and plans;
- Facilitates the creation of a partnership based on trust.
- Promotes a real understanding of how actions taken by government on behalf of people affect them.
- Enables parties clarify and limit expectations and perceptions thereby preventing disruptions and resistance to decisions already or about to be made;

- Enables parties seek, evaluate and obtain alternative solutions, and obtain support for the implementation of the resolution thus the avoidance of conflict;

Planning for Consultation: Key questions

- i. What is the purpose of the consultation? Is the consultation about:
 - Improving a specific service.
 - Developing a new product or service.
 - General policy development.
 - Future plans.
 - Setting up an ongoing consultative forum.
 - Resolving conflicts.
 - Educating and informing stakeholders, identify their views, needs, values or concerns.
 - Obtaining feedback about propositions, contemplated or intended actions/decisions or situations before, during or after implementation.
- ii. What are the expected outcomes? Is the expected outcome
 - A new service.
 - Improved services or service standards.
 - Remediation or recovery.
 - An agreed plan.
 - Information on services.
 - Organizational policy.
 - Organizational strategy.
- iii. Who do you need to consult with? There is no such thing as ‘general public’. Identify and segment your customers so as to avoid excluding any group:
 - All those involved in decision making for the MDA (e.g. Commissioner, Permanent Secretary, members of the Board etc).
 - Key customers and users of services provided by the MDA.
 - Partners (e.g. suppliers, those that deliver services on behalf of the establishment).
 - Local community.
 - Other government regulators.

- Media.
 - Other Service providers.
 - Representatives of CSOs.
 - Donors.
- iv. When do you consult?
- Before and when changes would be made to services.
 - When customers' / consumers' perception of the quality and relevance of supplied services becomes vital.
 - When crisis is looming or has occurred in customer – provider relationship where customer education is required for recovery or as input for understanding customers' expectations, needs and desires.
- v. What methods would be appropriate? How you choose to consult will depend on both the purpose and people you are targeting. Knowing the groups or communities you want to consult will assist in your decision on which consultation method to use. Methods to choose from include:
- Customer Surveys/Questionnaires.
 - Complaint/Feedback mechanisms.
 - Customer panels.
 - Focus groups.
 - Comment Cards/Suggestion Schemes.
 - Public meetings.
 - Face-to-face interviews.
 - Workshops.
 - Teleconferences.
- vi. What preparations would be necessary?
- Ensure top management support and sponsorship.
 - Have clear criteria for selecting participants.
 - Ensure the organisation understands the 'why' and 'expected outcomes' of the consultation.
 - Appoint spokespeople – The MDA should have a unified face and voice and it is vital therefore to appoint specific people (not more than 2 people in addition to the Chief Executive) to speak on behalf of the organisation. No matter how senior the official, no one should speak on behalf of the organisation unless they have been designated so to do.

- Give consistent messages and information – all senior officials together with the spokes people must be aware of the MDA's position on all issues and must be clear on those issues which can be discussed outside official circulars.
 - Consider facilitation skills training for staff who will be involved.
 - As part of planning, it is necessary to develop appropriate terms of reference, or ground rules for participation, e.g.:
 - What participants can expect to get out of it.
 - What is expected from all sides during the consultation process.
 - What time commitments are required or expected of participants.
 - What the implications are for the stakeholders.
 - When, where and at what times meetings will be held.
 - Whether the process or the discussions are confidential.
 - How information and the outcomes will be conveyed back to participants.
 - Plan for problems - many times inaccurate information filters through to stakeholders which can lead to a negative impact on service delivery and customer relations management. To pre-empt this eventuality, a plan needs to be put in place for issues which could have a negative impact on the MDA. This responsibility should be included in the functions of the information and communications officer in the MDA.
- vii. On D-Day:
- Arrange the seating so that all participants can hear and see each other.
 - Involve a variety of approaches, such as group work, role play or drama.
 - Breaking a large gathering into small groups for discussions will ensure maximum participation and contribution.
 - Short sessions are preferable.
 - Natural breaks should be given during consultation sessions.
 - Use appropriate information and communication formats to facilitate participation.
 - Use appropriate icebreaker for a 'warm-up' or introduction to set the tone and climate
 - Keep the introduction session brief.
- viii. Documentation during Consultation:

- Ensure that the outcomes of all consultative meetings are recorded
 - Record ***accurately*** the input of participants
 - Let them know how they will be kept informed of the progress of the issues raised during the consultation.
 - This is vital. Participants need to know what is happening ***after the consultation*** and how they can follow-up on it.
 - Thank people for their input and participation.
- ix. Using Consultation Reports:
- Before engaging in any consultation process an organisation has to be clear as to what will be done with the outputs.
 - Clear lines of action (Action Plans) need to be established so that the outputs from the process are used to effect change.
 - Without such channels, customers will feel that their input is not valued and will cease to engage with the process and organizations will lose an opportunity to improve services.
- x. Evaluation of the Consultation Process:
- Be open to learning from your successes and mistakes.
 - Evaluation is an important step in an effective consultation process and should not be missed.
 - The methods and techniques used for consultation can be evaluated by seeking feedback from participants and by self-reflection.
 - Always seek suggestions on how things can be improved. This can be done by asking participants to complete a questionnaire after the consultation. This information-gathering exercise is a part of the consultation process.

Appendix Five

Complaints Management Guidelines

Purpose of complaints handling systems

Complaints are an important tool for receiving feedback from customers and for monitoring customer satisfaction with government services. A key requirement is for all complaints, in whatever form, to be documented in order to contribute to continual government efforts to improve service delivery.

This document aims to provide guidance to MDAs on handling complaints. A Complaints Handling System needs to:

- Recognize, promote and protect the customer's right to complain about government services.
- Ensure that an accessible and well publicized complaints procedure is put in place.
- Provide an effective mechanism for responding to complaints in a timely and courteous manner.
- Empower staff at all levels to resolve issues wherever possible when complaints are first raised by the customer.
- Provide adequate resources to support the complaints management process.
- Determine and implement remedies to complaints.
- Record, assess and review complaints on a regular basis to ensure responsiveness and on-going commitment to service improvement.

Responsibilities

- The Management of MDAs, supported by staff of the Service Delivery Unit (SDU) is responsible for establishing a Complaints Handling System, and the nomination of a Complaints Officer.
- SERVICOM Kano State Office is responsible for providing support, advice and guidance in the establishment of the Complaints Handling System and the training of relevant staff.
- The SDU Service Improvement/Complaints Desk Officer has responsibility for the ongoing monitoring and review of Complaints Handling System within their MDA. SERVICOM Kano State will undertake periodic monitoring and evaluating exercises.

Types and Scope of Complaints

Customer complaints are generally a failure of Government to provide the level and quality of public services expected by the customer.

Complaints may include:

- Failure to provide a service or to achieve service standards as published in the relevant Ministry, Department or Agency Service Charter.
- Failure to fulfill legal or contractual obligations.
- Unfair and/or inequitable treatment by staff.
- Unacceptable delays or failure to respond to an enquiry or request.
- Dissatisfaction with a decision or the way that it has been made.
- Dissatisfaction with the behaviour of staff.
- Dissatisfaction with access to services.
- Dissatisfaction with physical environment.
- Dissatisfaction with communication/lack of it.

It is important to note that when a complaint is made reflecting disagreement with an aspect, or all, of an MDA policy which has been applied correctly, it should not be registered as a service delivery complaint. The complaint should however, be acknowledged and passed to the relevant MDA for policy review consideration.

Complaints Procedures and Process

- Complaints procedures and processes are to be documented and transparent, and are to provide the following information:
 - the name of the Complaints Officer;
 - the Complaints Officer's contact details;
 - details of how a complaint can be made;
 - the date by which an acknowledgement and/or response should be received.
- Copies of complaints procedures and processes are to be made available to the public, located in every office, and incorporated in a published Service Charter.
- A complaints form should be developed to assist complainants.
- Copies of complaints procedures are to be made available to staff.

- A central record must be located in the open registry and maintained with unrestricted access for staff.

Named Complaints Officer

A named complaints officer must be designated for each service window with responsibilities for:-

- Establishing an up to date log of complaints detailing:-
 - date of receipt;
 - the nature of the complaint;
 - the name and contact details of the complainant;
 - the date of acknowledgement of the complaint;
 - the name of the official to whom the complaint has been passed;
 - the date when the complaint was passed to the to the official.
- Providing a written initial acknowledgement of receipt to the complainant within the number of days promised in the Service Charter. The acknowledgement should also provide the name and contact details of the Official to whom the complaint has been passed.
- Monitoring the progress of the complaint and ensuring that a formal response is made by the appropriate officer dealing with the complaint in accordance with the MDA complaints policy.
- Maintaining and accumulating data on complaints and identifying trends for planning and service improvement purposes.
- Providing summary information at fixed periods (at least quarterly) to the SDU, the senior management of the MDA, and to SERVICOM Kano State Office.
- Providing summary reports on complaints for inclusion in the MDA Annual Report.

Complaints Handling Process

Each MDA is required to set up systems and processes to ensure that all complaints are managed effectively, efficiently, consistently and fairly. Complaints handling processes should ensure that:

- Staff at all levels are empowered to resolve issues wherever possible when complaints are first raised by the customer.
- Staff refer written complaints to the named Complaints Officer without delay.

- All complaints are treated with confidentiality.
- Customers are not treated adversely or differently as a result of lodging a complaint.
- Complainants are kept informed of the progress of their complaint and of the final outcome.
- Complainants are advised of avenues for a review of their complaint if they are dissatisfied with the outcome.
- There is an objective review of complaints and processes to determine whether resulting actions were fair and in accordance with legislation.
- Complaints handling systems and processes are transparent.

Responsiveness

To build customer confidence, each MDA is required to set and implement standard response times and procedures for dealing with complaints. The times set must be reasonable and realistic. The time-lines established must be assessed regularly to ensure that they are sufficient for adequate and effective investigation, and to ensure customer satisfaction.

Monitoring and Review

The Complaints officer and the Management of MDAs are responsible for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the implementation and outcomes of the Complaints Handling System. Reports are to be produced on an agreed basis, to be determined by the appropriate authority, in conjunction with SERVICOM Kano State Office. Summaries of information are to be published.

Appendix Five Complaints Escalation Framework

