

Customer Service Improvement Status Report

Bureau: Portland Housing Bureau
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Bureau Mission and Goals: *Please attach copies of your bureau's mission, goals, and any workplans or other policy documents that specifically address customer service improvement efforts. Please describe how your strategic plans include customer service, and any plans for improvement.*

Attachments:

- PHB "Our Vision"
- PHB Budget Guiding Principles
- PHB Business Operations Expectations

Customer service is a core component of PHB's mission, goals and strategic planning. Over the past year, the PHB has undergone tremendous reorganization as the housing operations from PDC have been merged into the bureau. This process has or will improved customer service in three major ways:

- Integration of the former PDC and BHCD housing operations has increased communications, coordination and awareness internally. This has created a single point of information for interested citizens.
- PHB's finance and accounting team has been strengthened and the new team has redesigned many of its core business processes (e.g., contract processing, invoice processing, fiscal monitoring). This has improved the quality of service PHB provides to its sub-recipient contractor customers.
- Creation of a public information officer will dramatically improve the coordination and effectiveness of PHB's outreach to citizen stakeholders

Furthermore, PHB is committed to involving its customers in the shaping of the organization

- Soon after the PHB was created, the bureau conducted a "design lab" to create an initial framework for the shape the new bureau would take. Customer and citizen stakeholders took part in this process.
- The PHB has continued this year to engage a budget advisory committee to provide valuable feedback into budget development prioritization
- Over the next year, the bureau will undertake a strategic plan process which will incorporate a great deal of customer and citizen stakeholder involvement

Customer Service Assessment: *Please attach a copy of your most recent customer service survey and survey results. Please indicate how your bureau assesses timeliness, accuracy, helpfulness, expertise, and available information. If you do not currently survey bureau customers, please explain any future plans.*

PHB has not undertaken a formal customer service survey in the past two years. This is due to the magnitude of workload created by the merging of former PDC and BHCD housing operations into the new PHB. However, the bureau's business operations team has added a customer service survey to its workplan for 2010.

Furthermore, the bureau has retained a customer service focus through this period of transition. In addition to the efforts described under "Bureau Mission and Goals" above, PHB has also performed the following:

- Shortly after her hire in FY 2008-09, the bureau's Business Operations Manager conducted interviews of subrecipient contractor customers. This provided the bureau with an assessment of customer satisfaction and the effectiveness of many core business processes. This data triggered many process redesign efforts, including the two bulleted hereafter.
- In the FY 2008-09 Requested Budget Customer Service Report, the bureau observed that invoice processing turnaround times had increased to an average of 4-6 weeks. To address this major customer service issue, the bureau filled vacancies with experienced and effective candidates, redesigned business processes and set expectations for turnaround times. Since these improvements have been made, invoice processing now takes the bureau 1.5 weeks from the date of invoice receipt.
- PHB also identified contract development and execution as an area in need of improvement, as evidenced by its inclusion in the bureau's Service Improvement Plan. As reported in the FY 2009-10 Winter BMP, "...in FY 2008-09, it took the bureau an average of 75 calendar days to fully process a contact. In the current fiscal year, contract processing has improved to an average of 30 calendar days. Furthermore, contracts are processed in an average of 14 calendar days if Council action is not required; if Council action is necessary, the process takes approximately 30 calendar days."

Workforce Development: *Please describe any efforts you have made to develop customer service competency within your workforce in the areas of recruitment, training, and evaluation. Please share any details you can provide regarding progress in these areas over the past year (training program information, key bureau contacts, recruitment/evaluation material examples, etc.)*

Recruitment

- The bureau's recruitment efforts over the past 18 months have prioritized establishing a foundation to support strong customer service. This, of course, means the bureau recruited candidates with strong customer service skills. However, it also means the bureau targeted candidates with a deep knowledge of:
 - Project management, to maintain customer-friendly operations during bureau transition;
 - Public finance, to maintain sound financial management that minimizes disruptions to sub-recipient contractor projects and services
 - Process improvement, to optimize business processes
 - SAP, to develop bureau expertise that promotes alignment of bureau operations with SAP process and structural requirements

Evaluation

- Each member of the PHB staff is evaluated on customer service competency during his or her annual review. Customer service is considered a core competency for all staff.

Education

- Each member of the PHB administrative staff is held accountable to the bureau's "Business Operations Expectations" (see attachment), which set a standard for high-quality bureau customer service