

2020 - 2025

# CUSTOMER FIRST STRATEGY





Photo: Larrakia Rangers © Larrakia Nation  
Cover Photo: Sounds at Sunset © Christine Noble



# Acknowledgement

City of Darwin acknowledges the Larrakia people as the Traditional Owners of all the land and waters of the Greater Darwin region. To the Larrakia, Darwin is known as Garramilla. The original language of the Larrakia is Gulumirgin (pronounced Goo-loo-midgin). Often referred to as 'Saltwater People', the Larrakia lived, loved, birthed, hunted and survived a life on pristine coastal and inland areas. Established 'song lines' connecting Larrakia people to Country penetrate throughout their land and sea allowing stories and histories to be told and retold for future generations. The Larrakia culture and identity is rich and vibrant. Larrakia are proud of their culture and history and work hard to maintain their links to Country and ancestors.



# Contents

Overview	5
Where We Are Today	6
Who Our Customers Are	7
What Our Services Are	8
What Our Customers Want	9
Our Customer Charter	10
Our Customer FIRST Framework	12
Find Out What Our Customers Want and Expect	13
Improve Communication	14
Respond In a Timely Manner	15
Streamline Services	16
Track Our Performance	17
Key Actions	18
Measuring Our Progress	20





# Overview

At City of Darwin, we exist to serve our community and our customers.

In the more than 60 years since our establishment in 1957, much has changed for our organisation as well as our customers, with rapid growth in technology shaping the way people live their lives and access services for everything from paying rates to disposing of waste.

In conjunction with this change, it is timely for Council to develop this Strategy to formally consider how we interact and support our diverse customers and stakeholders, enabling us to fulfill our vision of becoming “City for People. City of Colour”.

As part of this Strategy development, Council’s Senior Managers’ Group conducted a review of customer service within the organisation and researched leading practices. This led to the development of recommendations and this Strategy which strives for Council to become a leader in customer service excellence.

To achieve this, we looked at what leading councils throughout Australia were doing and we were inspired by their genuine efforts to put customers at the heart of their organisations.

We then talked with the people who are responsible for providing our services as well as a cross-section of those who use them. We spoke with staff and consulted with customers and stakeholders through interviews and focus groups to find out what Council could do to improve our services and to put our customers first. Their comments have shaped this Strategy and we thank those involved for their honesty and constructive feedback.

Through delivery of this Strategy, Council will continue to focus on customer service for those who wish to engage with us personally, whilst promoting digital engagement opportunities to support customers wishing to transact and interact how they want, when they want.

This Strategy contains a number of initiatives that will be built upon to ensure responsiveness to the changing needs of our customers and continuous improvement over the life of the Strategy.

## Guiding Strategies

At City of Darwin, Darwin 2030 ‘City for People. City of Colour.’ guides all that Council does. We are driven by five strategic directions for achieving this vision:

**Strategic Direction 1:** A capital city with best practice and sustainable infrastructure

**Strategic Direction 2:** A safe, liveable and healthy city

**Strategic Direction 3:** A cool, clean and green city

**Strategic Direction 4:** A smart and prosperous city

**Strategic Direction 5:** A vibrant and creative city

Council’s CARES values also guide this Strategy and underpin our decision-making processes:



### CUSTOMER SERVICE

We make customers and the community the focus of all we do; our service is fair, flexible, reliable and innovative



### ACCOUNTABILITY

We honour our commitments and take responsibility for our actions



### RESPECT

We seek and value the contribution of others, listen before we talk and treat others as we would like to be treated



### EXCELLENCE

We strive for the highest quality in our work and dealings with community members, Aldermen, colleagues and business partners. We go over and above, consistently doing more than is expected



### SOLIDARITY

We work together as one team; there is strength in unity and together we achieve great things. We are united in our decisions and actions

# Where We Are Today

Darwin is one of Australia's thriving capitals with a population of almost 85,000 people from more than 60 nationalities and 70 different ethnic backgrounds. Our city is both modern and multicultural, hosting many exciting cultural festivals, weekly food and craft markets and a casual family-friendly lifestyle. In business and industry circles, Darwin is described as Australia's gateway to South East Asia, with desirable Asian locations just a short flight away.

Darwin has an exciting future. Through the #SmartDarwin initiative, Darwin is a leader in ensuring our community and economy are prepared for a digitally and data-enabled future. For customer service, #SmartDarwin enables opportunities for:

- customers to interact and transact with Council when they want, how they want
- enhanced community engagement and participation
- improved data driven, evidence based decision making to enhance transparency
- addressing social inclusion and celebrate cultural diversity

With a young, tech savvy population, Council will embrace technology and the opportunities it provides, whilst retaining the personal touch.



**85,000**  
POPULATION

**60**  
NATIONALITIES

**70**  
DIFFERENT ETHNIC  
BACKGROUNDS



## Who Our Customers Are

At City of Darwin, we recognise the importance of **external** and **internal customers**.

**External customers** are not only our valued ratepayers, but everyone who lives, works, provides services, or does business here, and we welcome visitors to our City.

**Internal customers** include our departmental staff who are involved in creating, delivering and managing our wide range of services and infrastructure. They include Elected Members who, through their direct dealings with the community, are well-positioned to help shape and inform our service priorities.

### Customer segments identified included:

External	Internal
Our Darwin Community	Elected members
Ratepayers	Staff
Homeless	Managers
Domestic and International Visitors	Departments
Other Local Communities	Contractors and Consultants
Northern Territory Government	
Educational Institutions	
Business Enterprises	
Military and Defence	
Non-Government Organisations	
Suppliers, Contractors and Partners	



## What Our Services Are

In the 2020/21 financial year, City of Darwin plans to spend more than \$121M to deliver services and infrastructure to the community. This includes:

- Arts and Cultural Development
- Asset Management
- Buildings and Facilities
- Corporate Services
- Cemeteries
- City Parking
- City Planning
- Climate Change and Environment
- Community Development and Engagement
- Community Infrastructure and Open Space
- Customer Service
- Darwin Entertainment Centre and Darwin Amphitheatre
- Darwin Safer City
- Digital and Information Management
- Economic Development
- Events Management and Production
- External Affairs
- Family and Children's Services
- Finance
- Fraud and Proficiency Management
- Governance, Strategy and Performance
- Government Relations and Advocacy
- Human Resources and Safety
- International Relations
- Legal Services and Complaints Management
- Legislation, Policy and Compliance
- Libraries
- Marketing and Communications
- Procurement
- Recreation and Leisure
- Regulatory Services
- Risk, Audit and Insurance
- Smart City Program
- Strategic Projects and Grants
- Tourism
- Waste Management
- Youth Programs





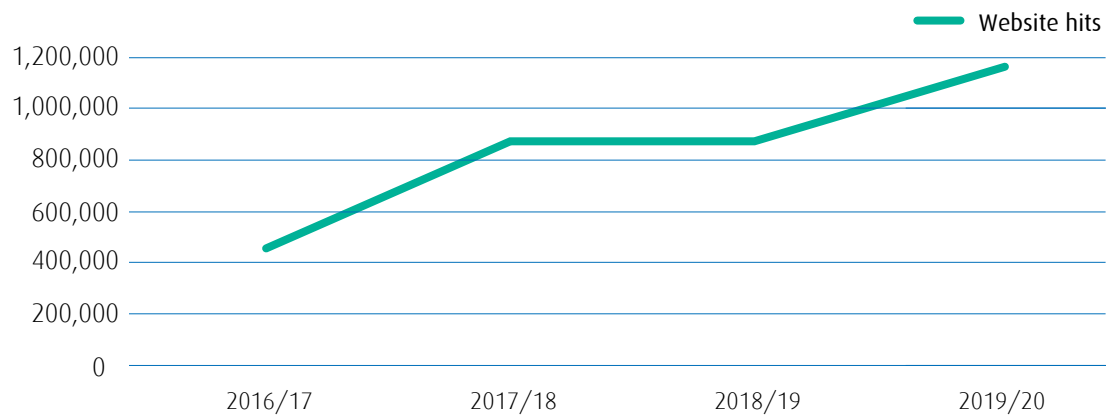


## What Our Customers Want

- I am very impressed that Council is doing this (consultation) - this is a great step towards an **open, honest dialogue**. Thank you to Council for starting this process - I think a lot can come out of this.
- Better promotion of Council services.** Many people are not aware of all the services Council provides.
- Improve **accessibility and freedom of information**. It will allow people to access things and engage with things better across diverse needs and backgrounds.
- Interpreter or translation services.** We have people here from more than 50 different countries - it would be good to have the website translated to other languages.
- Make **information more easily accessible**.
- More focus on the customer - helpfulness and enthusiasm.**
- A simple **infographic** (on the website and with your rates notice) to actually tell people where their money (including from parking fines!) goes.

Our research shows that digital is the way of the future. We continue to respond to our customers’ needs for online services, whilst maintaining a friendly community focus.

In 2017, we launched a new Council website offering a fresh experience for customers. Since the launch, we have seen a significant increase in website usage:



- In 2019/20 City of Darwin received 8,635 online payments
- City of Darwin continue to increase their Facebook followers each year from **10,476 in 2018**, **13,629 in 2019** to **16,026 in 2020**

Enabling customers to engage with Council at their convenience on their terms will result in a better customer experience for our community.

# Our Customer Service Plan

The City of Darwin's Customer Service Plan (Charter) describes our commitment to you and outlines the processes and service expectations that support our Plan.

## Service Promise

- Provide valued services that put our customer FIRST
- Engage to understand our community to better shape decisions and tailor our services
- Innovate and embrace change to connect and transact your way
- Conduct service delivery with integrity, equality and accountability

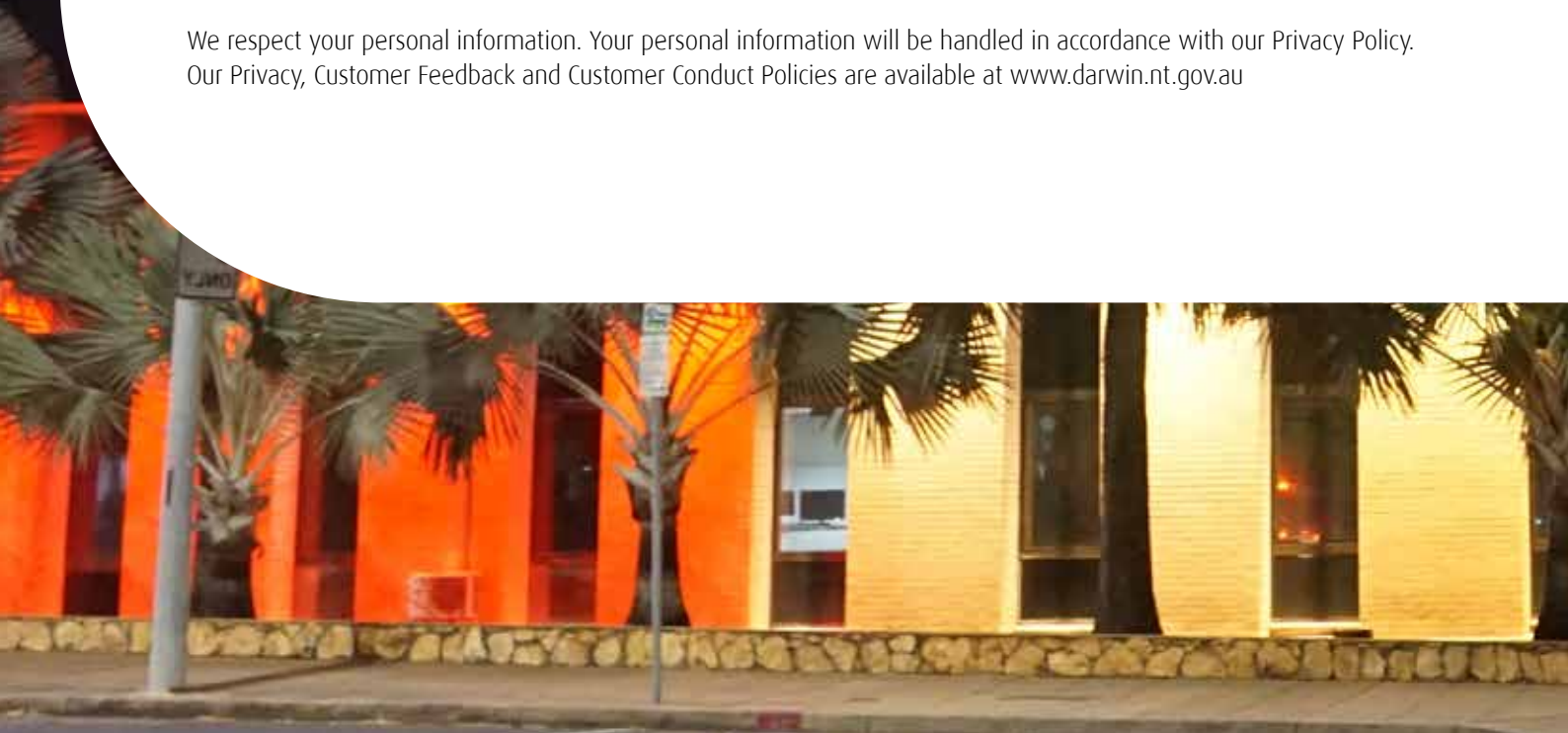
## Service Delivery

- Provide friendly, skilled staff that are empowered to find a solution at first point of contact
- Provide services and communicate in a timely and efficient manner, through "your choice" channel of contact
- Use common sense decision making and communicate in easy to understand ways
- Provide flexible service options using current technologies and streamlined systems
- Monitor our performance and gain insights to inform decisions and improve services

## Service Feedback & Assistance

- Assist us by treating our staff and other customers, with courtesy and respect
- Tell us if our service does not meet your expectations and share your ideas on how we can improve
- Help us to acknowledge our people by telling us when you have received great customer service
- Provide us with up to date and accurate information so that we can respond in a timely manner

We respect your personal information. Your personal information will be handled in accordance with our Privacy Policy. Our Privacy, Customer Feedback and Customer Conduct Policies are available at [www.darwin.nt.gov.au](http://www.darwin.nt.gov.au)





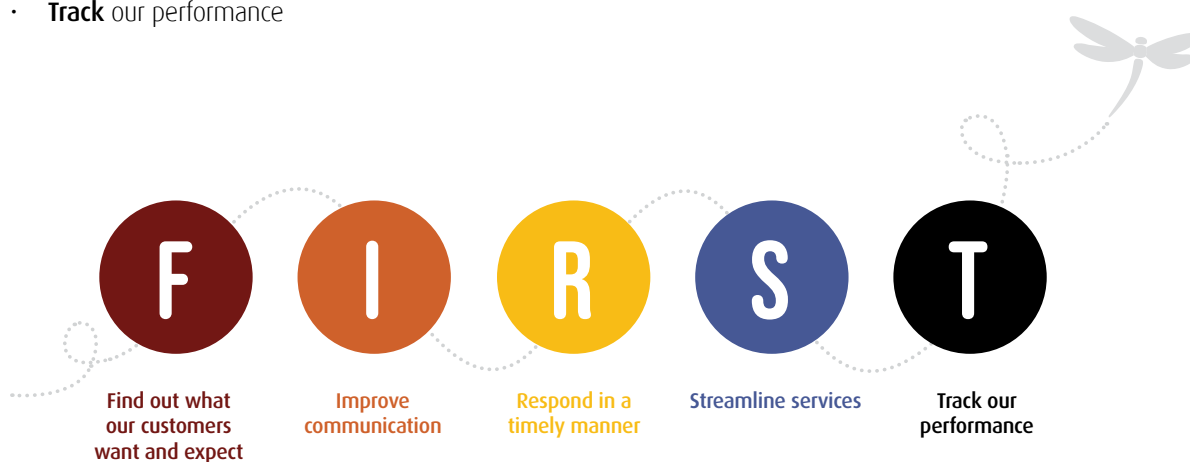
<b>Contacts</b>	
Visit us at: <b>Civic Centre, Harry Chan Avenue</b>	Open Monday-Friday 8am to 5pm
Phone us: <b>08 8930 0300</b>	Monday-Friday 8am to 5pm
Contact us for after hours emergencies: <b>08 8989 2843</b>	Anytime after hours
Email us at: <b>darwin@darwin.nt.gov.au</b>	We will aim to acknowledge you within 2 business days. If the issue is complex, we will keep you informed of progress
Visit our website: <b>www.darwin.nt.gov.au</b>	24 hours, 7 days a week
Visit us on social media	24 hours, 7 days a week
 <b>cityofdarwin</b>  <b>cityofdarwin</b>  <b>city_of_darwin</b>	
Send us mail: <b>GPO Box 84 Darwin NT 0801</b>	We aim to acknowledge you within 5 business days. If the issue is complex, we will keep you informed of progress.
If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment contact us through National Relay Service	<b>www.relayservice.gov.au</b> We will also identify our staff who are fluent in Auslan to assist you.
For Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) call: <b>13 14 50</b>	We will facilitate communicating with you in your first language



# Our Customer First Framework

City of Darwin's Customer First framework is based on five core principles and is designed to consistently achieve excellence in serving our customers:

- **Find** out what our customers want and expect
- **Improve** communication
- **Respond** in a timely manner
- **Streamline** services
- **Track** our performance

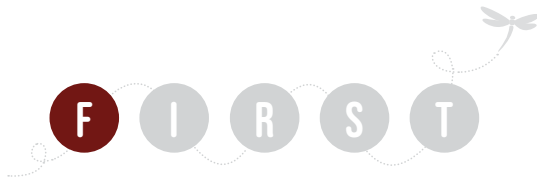


## Our Customer First Goal

To meet *and exceed* the needs of our community and visitors by providing great services that put our customers first.

To achieve this, we will listen to and learn from our customers' clear preferences in interacting with Council. They want their experience of contacting Council to be easier, simpler and quicker.

We want customers to enjoy a seamless customer experience where their needs come first, regardless of how they contact Council, face-to-face, online, over the phone, or in their own language.



## Find Out What Our Customers Want and Expect

City of Darwin regularly seeks the views of community members through survey research and informal feedback and comments. Embracing a Customer First culture means continuously seeking customer feedback, and valuing customer input and involvement in shaping our services. **Customer First** starts with:

### Actively listening

We will invest time in understanding what our customers want and expect. To achieve this, we will improve opportunities for customers to provide their comments and feedback.

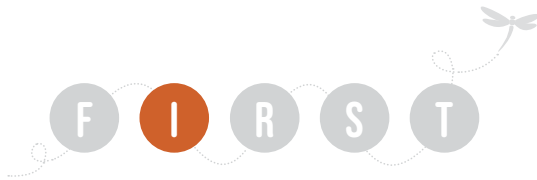
### Involving customers in designing services

Our future services will be designed with a clear understanding of our customers' wants and expectations. To achieve this, we will explore new ways to collaborate so our services meet their expectations.

### Reviewing customer data to gain insights

The key to our future success lies in gaining customer insights by linking our services, systems and staff. These insights will allow us to better understand customer preferences, and other key aspects of the customer experience to make informed decisions and offer better service.





## Improve Communication

We recognise the importance of providing access to information in a variety of ways to suit the needs of our customers. Our **Customer First** approach to communication means:

### Making it easy to access information

Customer choice is key to our vision for Council and that flows through to our customer contact channels. In a 24/7 world driven by technology, we will make sure we offer a range of communication channels when and how our customers want to use them.

### Making our information easy to read and understand

Our multicultural audiences need access to information in ways they can understand. We will ensure our information is clear and simple to read.

Although many of the services and projects Council provides are complex, we will endeavour to communicate these in ways our customers can easily understand.

### Providing consistent service and advice

We thrive on building and maintaining positive relationships. We also recognise the importance of being able to deliver consistent service and advice by capturing and sharing our knowledge through efficient systems and up-to-date technology.





## Respond In a Timely Manner

We appreciate our customers are busy and their time is important. Our new Customer First Framework outlines our service promise and the standards of service customers can expect in responses to assistance.

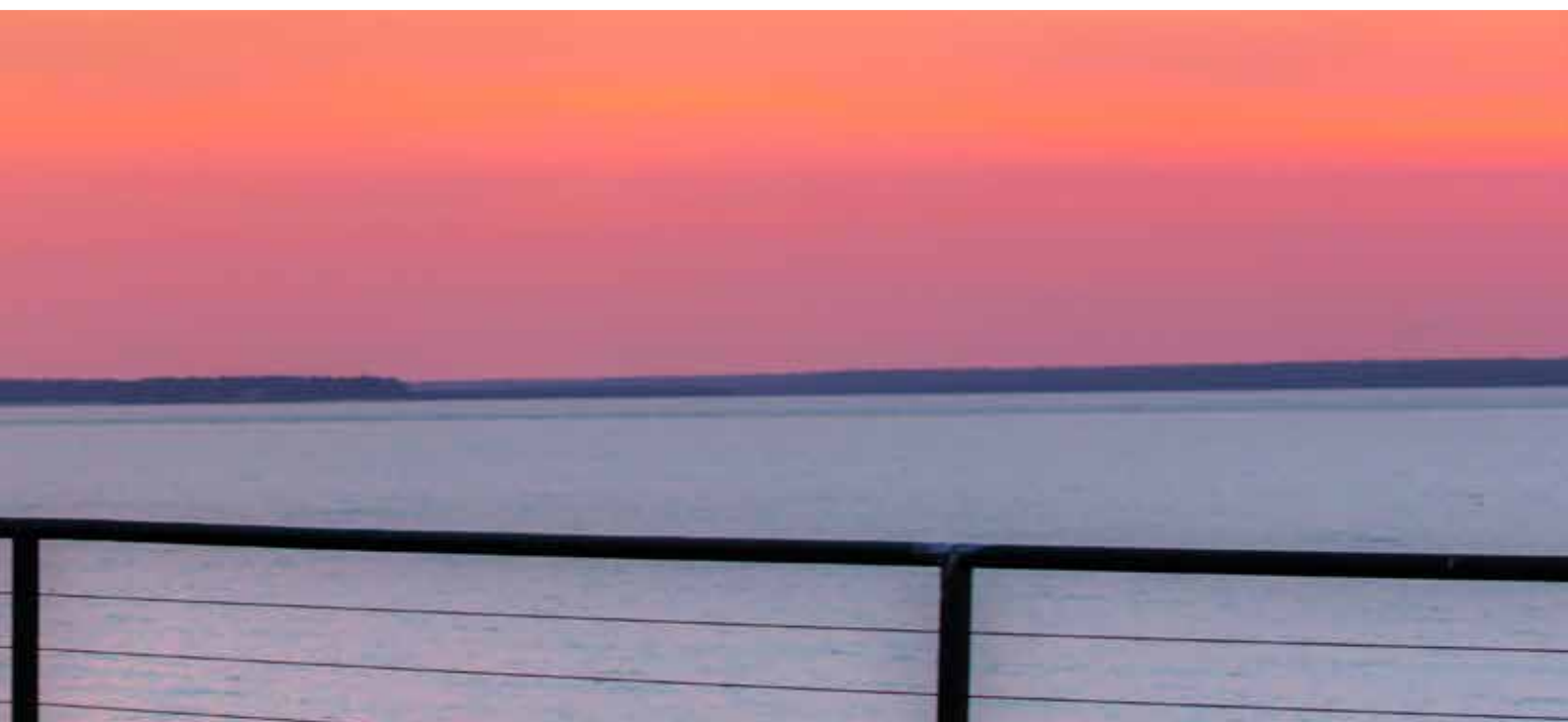
Timeliness is one of our values that underpins our **Customer First** promise by:

### Offering a single point of contact

Our customers will enjoy a seamless experience, regardless of which channel they choose to use. This means being able to track customers and their communications and requests across all channels. It also means being alert to new and emerging technologies.

### Empowering staff to resolve requests

Our staff will have the confidence to own decisions and resolve customer issues the first time. By focusing on first contact resolution, we will empower staff to reach above and beyond customer expectations.





## Streamline Services

**Customer First** means our staff will be equipped with the appropriate skills, current technology and streamlined systems to deliver the best possible customer experience. We will achieve this by:

### Working in partnership to deliver a seamless experience

We will “walk in our customers’ shoes” and refine our processes to make it easy for them to interact with us and to access our services. Our seamless customer experience with customers will involve:

- prompt actions
- accurate information
- training on services and processes
- empowered and knowledgeable staff
- completed connections and touch points
- consistent, reliable behaviours.

This will require coordination across the organisation and collaboration between internal teams.

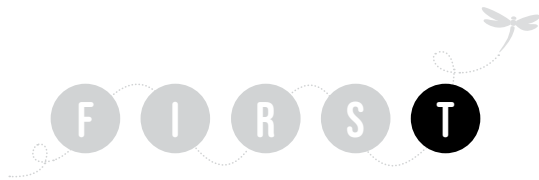
### Using technology to improve our customers’ experience

Rapid uptake of the internet, smartphones, social media, information sharing, ecommerce and the roll-out of the NBN has made ‘digital’ a real opportunity for City of Darwin, and enabled entirely new channels for service delivery, business process improvement and innovation.

Through #SmartDarwin, we will be well positioned to take advantage of advances in technology to enhance customer services into the future.







## Track Our Performance

We will monitor our performance by listening to our customers, tracking their requests and using the best available data to gather insights, to better inform our decisions and improve our services.

We will measure progress toward **Customer First** as our new standard by:

### Creating a Customer First culture

Excellent customer service can only be delivered by well-trained and supported staff members who represent our culture and values. **Customer First** will be achieved by having responsive, accountable and professional staff who maintain a consistent approach to service delivery.

### Improving our data gathering

During implementation of this Strategy, a number of activities will occur which will allow for benchmarking of services, the setting of service level expectations, and timely and relevant reporting. Opportunities will also be available for external and internal customers to provide feedback, which will help to inform decision making and measuring our success.



# Key Actions

Find Out What Our Customers Want and Expect	What we will do
1.1 Ensure CoD has an effective customer feedback system which facilitates external and internal customer feedback and suggestions	Research and review options for customer feedback via the website and other channels
1.2 Create opportunities for our customers to assess and provide input into the services offered by CoD	Actively seek customer comment on proposed new services
1.3 Monitor and record customer feedback in a single system	Review current customer feedback system data, repository and reporting options
Improve Communication	What we will do
2.1 Enable different ways for customers to contact and receive updates from Council on requests	Actively seek customer comment on how they wish to interact with CoD and facilitate different options
2.2 Communicate customer service initiatives in plain language	<p>Develop guidelines for communicating in plain language and undertake a review of current communications against these guidelines</p> <p>Review current offering of information for CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse), elderly, disabled or other marginalised audiences</p>
2.3 Enhance awareness of CoDs customer services via the promotion of the <b>Customer First</b> Strategy	Communicate the <b>Customer First</b> Strategy via a targeted communications plan to internal, external and community stakeholders
2.4 Improve cross departmental communication and internal engagement	<p>Review current customer feedback system data, repository and reporting options with a view to implementing a new Customer Management System</p> <p>Assess requirements and then draft Service Level Agreements (SLAs) between internal CoD departments in relation to customer service information</p>
Respond in a Timely Manner	What we will do
3.1 Design and implement our First Contact Resolution (FCR) approach and procedures	<p>Define the FCR and review current guidelines including; service targets, escalation, governance, communication, training</p> <p>Develop FCR framework and measurement</p> <p>Design and implement FCR training</p>
3.2 Review location and positioning of customer service counters and other community access points either face to face or online availability	Implement a service delivery review that considers customer preferences for face to face or remote access to services. Consider positioning of counters and access flow and self service options



Streamline Services	What we will do
4.1 Design and document customer journey flow charts that streamline both internal and external service delivery	Review current customer service business processes and after consultation make adjustments to processes to enhance value add for customers
4.2 Upgrade customer service infrastructure and implement enabling technologies as guided by CoDs <i>Digital Strategy</i>	Incrementally upgrade IT hardware and software as part of the continuous improvement plan
	Review and consider enhancements in CoDs electronic documents and records system and Customer Management Systems (CRM)
	Review and redevelopment of CoDs website and staff intranet including consideration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• easy to use electronic and web forms</li> <li>• enhanced public information</li> <li>• flexible online payment options</li> <li>• booking of facilities online</li> <li>• increased website viewing options for people with disabilities</li> </ul>
	Implement a standardised email signature for all CoD staff and contractors, with common information and contacts
Track Our Performance	What we will do
5.1 Create opportunities for staff to understand and communicate with confidence what <b>Customer First</b> means in their daily activities	Develop a targeted customer service excellence training program
5.2 Recognise staff and their contribution to the achievement of <b>Customer First</b> service excellence	Develop a mechanism for identifying and rewarding staff who demonstrate and lead <b>Customer First</b> service excellence
5.3 Ensure CoD departments develop and agree service levels for internal services	Implement Service Level Agreements (SLAs) between internal CoD departments in relation to customer service information and expectations and monitor SLA success via regular reporting
5.4 Track, evaluate and report on external and internal customer service performance	Implement mechanisms to seek feedback including customer satisfaction surveys

# Measuring Our Progress

Measuring customer experience is an important part of understanding our success against this plan and the **Customer First** principles contained within. City of Darwin will monitor, implement and communicate the actions contained within the plan.

We will measure our success against this plan by:

- Capturing and assessing information against the delivery of this Customer First Strategy
- Monitoring trends in customer service data
- Monitoring customer experience and satisfaction
- City of Darwin will ensure that all measures of success are:
  - Monitored in our information systems and interpreted for improvements in performance
  - Used to refine our Customer Strategy, and staff training and development programs
  - Enhance and support changes in service delivery options
  - Consistently measured for the life of this strategy







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