

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

**Customer Service Standards
of
The United States Environmental Protection
Agency**

EPA's Six Principles of Customer Service represent the overarching *goals* of the Agency for its customer service performance. The Principles are for all employees to use in serving all external and internal customers. The Six Principles are the basic building blocks that apply to any activity that serves customers.

There are eight core processes which provide the majority of products and services to external Agency customers. Each of the eight sets of process specific standards should be used in combination with the Six Principles.

***CUSTOMER
SERVICE
begins with
ME***

**EPA's Six Principles
of
Customer Service**

1. **Be helpful! Listen to your customers.**
2. **Respond to all phone calls by the end of the next business day.**
3. **Respond to all correspondence within 10 business days.**
4. **Make clear, timely, accurate information accessible.**
5. **Work collaboratively with partners to improve all products and services.**
6. **Involve customers and use their ideas and input.**

Public Access Standards

These standards apply to requests for general information from the public. They do not apply where legal requirements take precedence, such as Freedom of Information Act inquiries. They are in addition to the Six Principles and amplify them as they apply to working with the general public.

1. We will strive to make information available through a variety of channels, including electronic media and intermediaries, such as, community organizations and local libraries.
2. We will hold ourselves accountable for a satisfactory response by providing mechanisms (contact names and telephone numbers or e-mail addresses) for reporting back on the quality of our responses and referrals.
3. When customers write to us (via mail, fax or computer):

We will mail a response within ten business days of receipt. If we need more time to research the answer, we will contact you within those ten days to tell you when to expect our response and who the contact person is.
4. When customers telephone us, we will:
 - Provide an Agency-wide public information telephone line, which will help route inquiries.

- Answer the call promptly and courteously.
- Make every effort to answer questions immediately. Where that is not possible, we will provide a timetable for responding during the initial conversation.

5. When customers contact us via computer:

- We will provide a single address for connection to all EPA resources on the Internet [<http://www.epa.gov>].
- We will provide descriptions, including source and known quality, of data made available electronically.

**“Customers don’t care
what you know,
until they know
that you care.”**

Ron Zemke

Research Grants Standards

The following standards amplify and expand the Six Principles, applying them to the research grants process:

1. When issuing requests for proposals to all interested parties, we will include a tentative timetable for activities in the selection process, so that applicants will know when they may learn if their proposal is selected for funding.
2. We will acknowledge receipt of proposals and applications within 15 working days from the cut-off date for receipt. The acknowledgment will include a unique identification number for each proposal and application so that applicants and agency personnel can more efficiently track their status.
3. The grants management office will conduct the administrative and legal reviews required for a proper award and issue the award of assistance agreements within 60 days from having received a request for funding from the research organization.
4. For active grants, the grants management office will process requests for administrative amendments to grants and issue the amendments within four weeks of the receipt of requests forwarded by the research organization.

Permitting Standards

In addition to the Six Principles, four standards apply to this process that serves three major customer groups (the general public, the regulated community and delegated State, Tribal, and local programs):

1. We will prepare permits that are clear, fair, appropriate, enforceable, and effective.
2. Our staff will be knowledgeable, responsive, cooperative, and available.
3. We will work with representatives of permitting authorities to continually improve permitting processes and services.
4. We will make our permit decisions within the time frame that is established for the type of permit being requested.

Pesticides Regulation Standards

The standards following apply to pesticide regulation, and should be used in conjunction with the Six Principles.

1. We will answer telephone calls within 24 hours of receipt, when possible. If the person receiving the call cannot fully respond to the inquiry, the customer will be forwarded to someone who can.
2. We will work to answer all correspondence within 10 working days of receipt. However, if our customers have raised questions which require extensive research to answer, it may take us longer. If we cannot provide a complete reply promptly, we will contact the customer within the 10-day period to explain why and when they may expect a full response.
3. We will seek opportunities to involve all affected stakeholders prior to our major regulatory or policy decisions.
4. We will provide clear and accurate information about the policies and procedures for pesticide registrations and reregistrations.
5. We will process applications and complete evaluations as promptly and as efficiently as possible without compromising either scientific quality or health and safety considerations.
6. We will ensure that we meet our statutory responsibilities to provide customers with easy access to all available information on pesticides.

7. We will proactively involve States, Tribes, and EPA Regions prior to establishing major policies or making major regulatory decisions affecting them.
8. We will undertake periodic surveys to find out what our customers think of our services and how we could make further improvements.

How can YOU provide outstanding customer service?

Answer the telephone promptly
Return calls quickly
Listen attentively
Be polite and professional
Be patient
Communicate to be understood, not just heard
Empathize and offer your help
Ask questions until you're sure what the problems is, then restate the problem it to have your understanding confirmed
Work with the person to find solutions
Be creative, flexible and cooperative
Give accurate answers and referrals
Give and get contact information so both of you can follow up

Partnership Programs Standards

The following standards amplify the Six Principles and provide additional goals for the Partnership Programs process:

1. We will always treat our customers with professional courtesy and respect.
2. We will proactively provide our customers accurate, up-to-date, and reliable information, products, and services, including high quality documents and publications.
3. We will actively listen to our customers' concerns and needs regarding our services and will develop technical assistance services, where possible, designed to address those needs and concerns.
4. We will ensure that inquiries will be referred to the right office and individual in EPA, or beyond EPA, if appropriate. We will encourage customers to report back on unsuccessful referrals.
5. We will respond as expeditiously as possible to inquiries for information.
6. We will strive to make information available through various channels, including electronic media, faxes, and intermediaries such as state assistance organizations, trade associations, and state agencies.
7. We will recognize and publicly acknowledge the accomplishments of our customers who achieve success in voluntary programs.
8. We will make every effort to streamline and make customer reporting requirements as practical and least burdensome as possible

State, Tribal, and Local Program Grants Standards

The following standards apply to this process, in addition to the Six Principles:

1. We will reduce the amount of grant paperwork by at least 25% through such activities as consolidation of application and reporting requirements, electronic transfer, and multi-year grant work programs.
2. We will acknowledge receipt of all grant applications within 10 working days.
3. For established grant programs, we will award grants funds within 90 days after receipt of a complete grant application (provided that the responsible EPA office has received funding authorization).
4. We will consult, in a timely manner, with states, tribes, and localities throughout the development of all major grants policy and guidance documents.

Enforcement Inspections and Compliance Assistance Standards

The following standards apply in addition to the Six Principles:

Compliance Assistance Field Representatives:

1. Requests for field assistance will be provided in a timely manner, taking resource constraints and expertise into consideration. Where assistance cannot be provided by the Agency, accurate referrals to other Federal, State or local agencies; private organizations; or educational institutions will be provided as appropriate.
2. Field representatives will be technically knowledgeable, understand the Federal regulatory requirements and Agency compliance and enforcement policies that apply to the facility, and be courteous and professional.

Compliance Inspectors:

3. Inspectors will make clear who he or she represents and the purpose of the visit.
4. Inspectors will be technically knowledgeable; understand the Federal regulatory requirements and Agency compliance and enforcement policies that apply to the facility, and be courteous and professional.

Compliance Assistance Tools:

5. In developing compliance assistance tools, the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance will:
 - Develop tools responsive to the needs and concerns raised by all interested stakeholders.

- Seek opportunities to involve all interested stakeholders in the development of compliance assistance tools.
- Strive to make information available through a variety of channels, including electronic media and intermediaries (e.g., trade associations, state assistance organizations, state agencies, and community organizations)

Compliance Assistance Centers

6. All Compliance Assistance Centers will be operated consistent with the Six Principles and public access standards, and any additional standards established for individual centers.

Enforcement

7. In all enforcement actions, the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance will be legally and technically knowledgeable, courteous and professional, and will work to resolve issues as expeditiously as possible.

Rulemaking Standards

In addition to the Six Principles, the following standards apply to the Rulemaking process:

1. We will ensure that customers have input into the rule development process by conducting public forums, or using electronic media or other forms of communication.
2. We will write Principles so they can be understood by the people who use and implement them. Principles will be tailored to the legal and technical knowledge and resources available to those affected.
3. We will include, in the preamble of all Federal Register notices accompanying a proposed or final rule, a plain English explanation summarizing the problem the rule is trying to solve, a summary of what the rule requires, and a short explanation of how the rule solves the problem.
4. We will work to ensure that all members of the regulated community know what is expected of them. To the extent possible, we will work with trade association, the press and others to notify all known parties who must comply with the rule through written or electronic media.

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