

Tablelands Regional Council



Customer Experience Strategy 2021-2024

Tablelands Regional Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Tablelands region and recognises their continuing connection to country. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future.



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Version Control

Version	Outline of Revisions	Date	Updated By
1.0	Initial development	18/04/2021	Coordinator Customer Relations and Coordinator Communication & Engagement
1.2	Draft for review	22/06/2021	Leadership Team
2.0	Adopted by Council	26/08/2021	



1. Executive Summary

At Tablelands Regional Council (TRC) we realise in order to create a great customer experience we need to work in partnership with our community and respond to our customers' needs. This strategy commits TRC to being a leading customer-centric organisation by delivering consistent, respectful and timely customer interactions, customer-focused systems and processes, and enhanced digital and face-to-face opportunities to support customers to transact and interact how they want, when they want.

A customer's experience shapes their perception and feelings about our organisation resulting from their interactions with our services, systems and staff.

The customer experience can start before making contact and a customer may have more than one point of contact or touchpoint. These touchpoints can happen across multiple service channels such as online, in person, at a transfer station or on a job site, and with more than one person in the organisation.

Understanding the customer experience allows us to orientate services around people's needs, rather than how local government is organised.

Whilst every customer may not be satisfied with the outcome of their request, it is important that we deliver on their expectations for ease of interaction, professionalism and knowledge of staff, timeliness of response and understanding of the legislative or service delivery limitations or obligations.

The strategy and Customer Experience Standards form part of a wider framework of continuous improvement in delivering quality customer experiences.

2. Context

The [TRC Corporate Plan 2021–26](#) sets the strategic direction for activities and guides the delivery of quality services for our community. Our purpose is to be a community focused, efficient and sustainable organisation. The key strategic themes are:

- Our Organisation — is progressive, efficient, transparent and collaborative.
- Our Community — is active, inclusive, connected and empowered.
- Our Economy — is growing, diverse, resilient and agile.
- Our Environment — is valued, managed and healthy.
- Our Infrastructure — is well planned, integrated and fit-for-purpose.

This strategy aligns with our organisational commitment to:

- model leadership and good governance
- collaborate and build partnerships to plan and deliver quality services
- deliver customer focussed systems and processes
- grow a high performance culture that delivers excellent outcomes and financial sustainability.

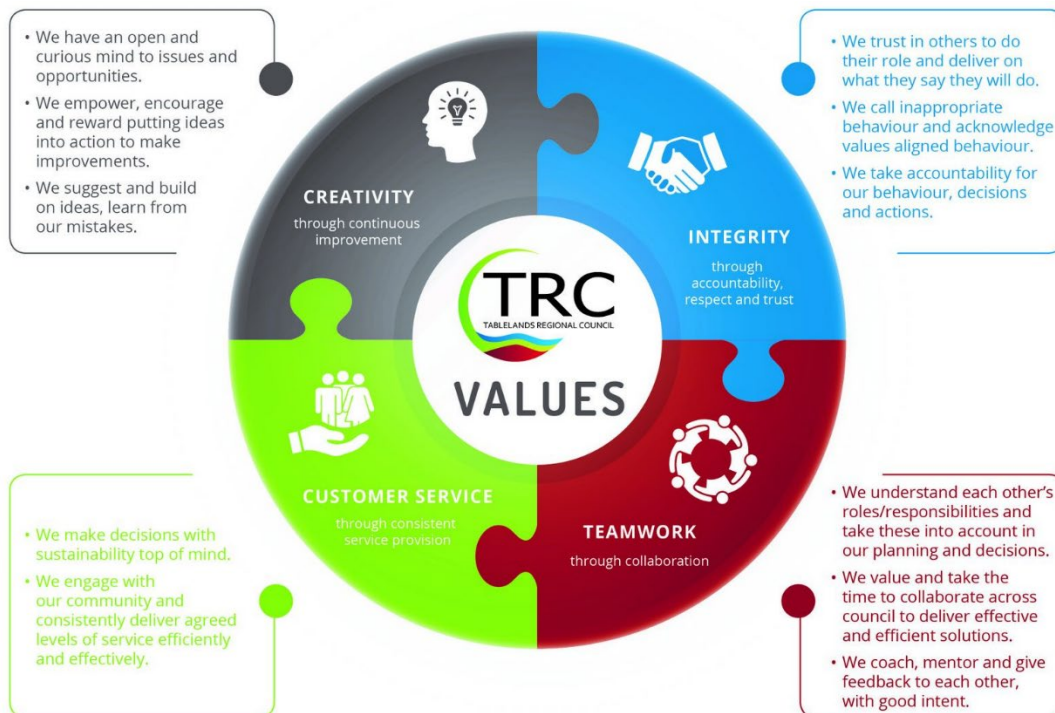
It informs and supports several documents including those relating to communication and engagement, economic development, culture, inclusion, information management, community services, planning and development, facilities and complaints.

Evolving customer needs and expectations are captured through:

- customer feedback — evaluating compliments and complaints
- internal feedback — from frontline staff who interact directly with our customers and staff who indirectly influence the customer experience
- data analysis — information on our customers, services and communication/service channels
- industry trends — industry and local government trends in delivering quality customer experiences.
- community consultation — for example [Community Satisfaction Report 2019](#).

Adapting to changing customer needs and expectations, streamlining systems and process, and focusing on how we can help our customers access information is the basis for delivering a quality customer experience. This includes providing options to interact in a way that meets their preferred method, providing clarification of our role as a local government provider of services, being respectful and consistent.

Our corporate values underpin the way we interact and approach our public service role.

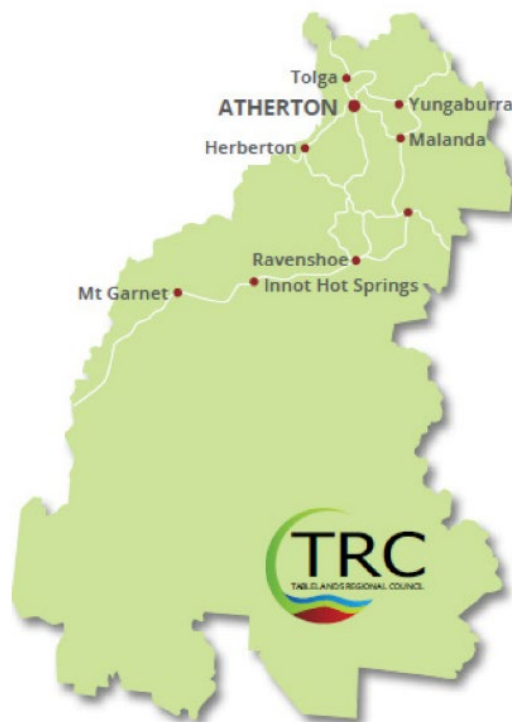


2.1 Our community

We provide services to 25,667 residents (estimated resident population 2020) and approximately 609,000 annual visitors. Our population is dispersed across 11,419 km².

Population highlights (Census 2016)

- Median age 47
- 40% over 55 years (24% under 20 years)
- 7.4% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 13% overseas born
- 4% speak a language other than English at home (0.4% do not speak English very well)
- 20% couples with children
- 14% older couples without children
- 25% lone person households
- 25% households renting
- 6.1% need assistance due to a disability
- 2,778 local businesses (ABS 2020)
- 11,380 employed residents
- 51% in labour force
- 25% low income households (less than \$650 per week)
- 70% of households have an internet connection
- 4.4% of households don't have a car



2.2 Our customers

Our customers include ratepayers, existing and potential residents, existing and potential business operators, visitors, investors, developers, service and not-for-profit organisations, community groups, government agencies and departments, elected officials, contractors, volunteers, people with historical and cultural ties to the region, and employees. They contact us for a range of reasons and rely on us to deliver services to meet current and future community needs and expectations.

2.2.1 Contact methods

Customers interact with us across a number of touchpoints and communication channels, enabling opportunities that support individual preferences.

- Face-to-face — at customer service centres, libraries, galleries, transfer stations, depots, information centres, worksites, corporate facilities, revegetation nursery, events and engagement activities (with staff, councillors, volunteers and contractors)
- Phone — 1300 362 242 (24/7)
- Email — info@trc.qld.gov.au
- Mail — PO Box 573, Atherton QLD 4883
- Online — website including online forms and applications, e-services, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn).

Technology is rapidly changing the way people access information and services. Councils across Australia have embraced the opportunity to provide access to various services online, enabling greater levels of self-service and addressing increasing levels of demand.

Email, local newspaper and website/online services are the preferred delivery methods of information and communication from TRC, with one in four customers preferring to visit a customer service centre or face-to-face interaction (Customer Satisfaction Report 2019). We provide information to the community across multiple communication platforms (Communication and Engagement Strategy 2020–25).

There is a shift in how our customers interact with us from traditional methods of contact (phone and face-to-face during business hours) to real time methods (website, afterhours phone, online forms and electronic payments). The introduction of online enhancements and payment options have led to changes in customer behaviour. These create simple processes which reduce operating costs.

- Phone calls to 1300 362 242 during business hours down 14% from 2017/18
- Average 19,000 customer requests per year
- Email is preferred method for a customer response (12% increase over three years), followed by telephone (one in four customers would like a response by telephone)
- 50% growth in afterhours contact over last three years
- Emails to info@trc.qld.gov.au tripled over last three years (9099 emails in 2020/21)
- Online receipts up 21% from 2017/18 (81% of receipts are processed online, BPay 67%), over the counter receipts have reduced by 39% since 2017/18
- 6,886 organic website hits per month.

New contact methods and adapting existing options are determined by customer need. As the take-up of online and real-time methods continue to grow, maintaining face-to-face options in locations across the region is important for those without access to internet, a phone or vehicle.

2.2.2 Frequent transactions

Rates, animals, waste, water and road maintenance are the most common services that our customers contact us for through our main contact points. Customers like to be kept up-to-date about the progress of their enquiry and other service information. Be more responsive and communicate better, and improve roads and paths are the top responses for improving service in the Community Satisfaction Report 2019.

Developing online and self-service options will increase transparency with service request progress.

2.3 Our services

We provide community, environmental, infrastructure, economic and organisational services and activities including community development programs, emergency management, arts, culture and events, communications and engagement, libraries, customer service, regional and town planning, local laws, development services, environmental health, natural resource management, buildings and precincts, plant and fleet, roads and transport, water and wastewater infrastructure, waste and recycling management, economic development and internal services.

With an ageing population and geographically dispersed community it is important to provide:

- access to services in locations across the region that may include partnerships with other service providers or mobile services
- information and communication channels incorporating face-to-face, phone, print, electronic and online
- accessible and inclusive services.

2.4 Our locations

We maintain multiple facilities across the region for customers to interact with staff and elected members, and/or access services and information.

The Atherton Customer Service Centre provides a one-stop shop for all transactions and is aligned with the corporate office for access to the Mayor and staff.

Service locations across the Tablelands

Service	Number	Location
Customer service centres*	4	Atherton (including corporate office), Herberton, Malanda and Ravenshoe
Libraries*	7	Atherton, Herberton, Malanda, Millaa Millaa, Mount Garnet, Ravenshoe and Yungaburra
Galleries	3	Atherton
Information centres	5	Atherton, Herberton, Malanda, Ravenshoe and Yungaburra
Transfer stations	8	Atherton, Herberton, Innot Hot Springs, Malanda, Millaa Millaa, Mount Garnet, Ravenshoe and Yungaburra
Depots	3	Malanda, Tolga and Ravenshoe
Nursery	1	Malanda
Aquatic centres	2	Atherton and Mt Garnet
Facilities for hire	15	Atherton, Herberton, Kairi, Malanda, Millaa Millaa, Mount Garnet, Ravenshoe and Yungaburra
Coordination centre	1	Atherton
Caravan parks	2	Malanda and Tinaburra
Pound	1	Tolga
Cemeteries	8	Atherton, Herberton, Malanda, Millaa Millaa, Mount Garnet, Ravenshoe and Yungaburra
Aerodromes	3	Atherton, Herberton and Mount Garnet

*Malanda, Ravenshoe and Herberton have combined library and customer service centres that provide services for customers seeking face-to-face services across the region. Opening times are reflective of customer demand.

3. Trends and challenges

3.1 Customer expectations

Customers value self-service and online channels, like to speak to someone locally who is knowledgeable about their enquiry or request, and sometimes need a response or assistance outside business hours. Being proactively advised of opportunities and potential problems that impact where they live, access to real-time progress on their requests and tailored communications are becoming increasingly important (63% of customers would like a response to their request).

How we meet evolving customer expectations using technology needs to be balanced by maintaining face-to-face and personalised methods to provide a holistic approach to customer interactions and ultimately, satisfaction.

3.2 Technology advances

Service providers are transitioning from providing traditional methods of contact only — telephone, email and in-person transactions — to real-time methods of contact including chatbots, automated tools, and on-demand services.

Connecting via social media, requests for automated self-service, and use of smart phones to access information is increasing (55% of users access our website through a smart phone or tablet).


Our customers may need support in transitioning to, accessing and using introduced or new technologies. Technology needs to be easy to access and use, intuitive, and provide the same or better information or service outcomes as traditional methods.

Enhancing our technology and online service methods will satisfy the expectation to access information and services at any time or place, in particular for those who prefer to transact online and those who do not reside in our region.

3.3 Customer-centric approach

Customer-centric is a business strategy that's based on putting customers first and at the core of your business in order to provide a positive experience and build long-term relationships. It's about operations tailor-made around the needs of customers rather than structuring everything around processes and services at the centre of the business.





Structuring information and services based on our customers' viewpoint, not our organisational structure, will reduce duplication and inconsistencies, and improve customer satisfaction. Critical activities to create a customer-centric culture include knowing our customers, embedding values that matter, walking the talk, recruiting and training to embody the culture, engaging employees, using metrics to monitor performance and establishing standards whilst letting staff innovate.

This model is also relevant to how we provide our internal customer service delivery.

3.4 Consistent service provision

Differences in service provision are remembered by our customers from pre-amalgamation. From handshake deals, to knowing your local parks and garden staff, customer experiences and satisfaction are linked to past experiences. A core value of TRC is customer service through consistent service provision. With a lack of direction regarding what defines consistent service provision, the role each employee is expected to take regarding customer service is unclear, which results in customers receiving different experiences based on who they interact with.

Clearly defined customer experience standards establish the expected service when interacting with customers to ensure both our customers and staff know what to expect and performance against achievement of the standards can be captured.

3.5 Standalone platforms

We maintain multiple standalone platforms that our customers access to seek information, provide feedback, make a payment, request and access services, and lodge applications. Removing duplication and integrating data systems will improve the customer experience.

Website enhancements will simplify how customers access information and systems online, seamlessly linking to relevant platforms and partner agency information.

3.6 Data security

Customers want their data to be secure and kept private. We use personal data to provide a tailored experience and will continue to enhance and invest in data security ensuring integrity and privacy of customer information.

3.7 Perceptions of local government

Customer perceptions of local government are influenced by their experiences, the effort it takes to request or use services, whether the cost represents value for money, and what is portrayed online and in the media. Customers want to be treated with respect, and feel their needs are being acknowledged, understood, and responded to in a timely manner. Staff being friendly and helpful and the issue being resolved in a timely manner influences satisfaction. Complaints and enquiries dismissed or staff unable to solve the issue (43%) and poor response from staff or councillors (33%) are the reasons for dissatisfaction with Council (Community Satisfaction Report 2019).

Bridging the gap between customer expectations (the result that they want) and service limitations (our capacity to meet their expectations due to legislative, financial and other restrictions) is an ongoing challenge. Ensuring timely responses, clarification on what is and isn't able to be delivered and why, avenues for escalation if not satisfied, and being professional, considerate and courteous is critical to improve customer experiences and perceptions.



4. Our commitment

We will:

- act in a way that reflects and upholds our values of customer service, integrity, teamwork and creativity
- be professional, considerate and courteous
- listen to and respect issues and concerns
- provide clear and concise information in a timely manner
- set clear expectations and deliver on those commitments
- recognise and respond to the diverse needs of our community and act with proper regard and sensitivity
- actively measure and monitor our performance against our customer experience standards.

To continuously improve our customers' experience, we will:

- remove complexity where we can
- provide valued services
- recruit and develop friendly, skilled, knowledgeable staff who are empowered to find a solution at first point of contact
- communicate in a timely manner in easy to understand ways, based on individual customer preferences
- provide flexible service options using technology and streamlined systems
- adapt policies to improve customer outcomes.

5. Strategic focus

Driving improvements in customer experience will be underpinned by continuous improvement within the focus areas of:

- people are priority
- streamlined systems and processes
- access and inclusion.

We will use our customer interactions, internal systems, customer satisfaction surveys, community engagement and third-party audits to collect feedback and be responsive to evolving customer and community expectations, priorities and aspirations.

5.1 People are priority

Goal: A customer-focussed workforce where everyone understands how their actions influence our customers' experience. We hold each other accountable in our service commitment.

Strategy	Action	Priority	Responsibility
Consistent service delivery standards	Develop Customer Experience Standards and supporting documents informed by staff engagement and embed expectations across workforce.	2021	LT
	Update information sources, systems, templates and responses to align with agreed service standards and monitor compliance with agreed deliverables and timeframes.	2021	LT
Customer-centric approach	Review organisational model to align with a customer-centric approach and adapt ways of working.	2021/22	ELT
Customer-centric training	Customer experience expectations included in induction, achievement and development plans, and team meetings. Investigate opportunities for learning experiences in frontline teams.	2021	PC & LT
	Develop and deliver annual customer-centric training with a focus on leaders (who influence service design), frontline staff (who deal directly with customers) and staff who action and investigate customer requests. Implement innovations and improvements as identified.	2021-24	CE
	Workforce updates promoting service improvements and activities.	2021-24	CE
	Update and maintain training and operational resources including for customer request management.	2022	CE
Cultivate a culture of customer-focussed continuous improvement	Empower staff to make process and efficiency improvements within their area of responsibility and service delivery.	2021	LT
	Provide timely updates and information sharing to frontline staff so they can resolve enquiries at the first point of contact.	2021-24	LT & Supervisors
	Update and maintain knowledge base for frontline service areas including afterhours provider to ensure consistency of information and processes.	2021-24	CE
	Update customer information sources to adapt to changing circumstances, ensure simplicity of messages and consistency in style.	2021-24	CE
	Capture customer satisfaction at completion of service requests and adapt to feedback.	2021-24	CE & LT
Build frontline staff capability	Support frontline staff to capture and collate feedback.	2022	LT & Supervisors
	Support frontline staff to deliver service improvements and adapt to changing technologies and organisational priorities (e.g. requests through social media).	2021-24	LT & Supervisors
	Mentor frontline staff to develop skills, de-escalate difficult situations and proactively provide a tailored customer experience.	2021-24	LT & Supervisors
Promote points of contact	Provide face-to-face, phone and online service options to meet community needs.	2021	CE
	Provide business cards with points of contact for customers (e.g. outdoor workforce, depots, libraries, transfer stations).	2021	CE
	Promote standard contact methods in all communications (e.g. phone, email, website, socials).	2021	CE

5.2 Streamlined systems and processes

Goal: Customer needs are the foundation for system and process improvements. We streamline customer processes and systems so that they are easy to access, understand and provide instantaneous outcomes.

Strategy	Action	Priority	Responsibility
One website connecting all services, systems, information and contact methods	Integrate standalone systems into corporate website.	2022-23	SI & CE
	Improve website content to align with customer-centric focus linked to common service requests and information needs.	2021-22	
	Provide free access to online services through customer service centres, libraries and information centres.	2021-24	
	Integrate real-time processing and access to service request updates including hire of facilities.	2022-24	
Maximise technology	Integrate system improvements that capture and remember customer details, enable single data entry, link to connected data, provide real-time updates on requests and applications, and capture feedback at point of resolution or closure.	2023-24	SI & CE
	Use logic to capture online customer requests and provide acknowledgement and receipt.	2021	CE
	Use data to improve customised online and face-to-face experiences.	2021-24	
	Monitor and respond to changes in demand for existing and new service channels based on customer expectations and use.	2021-24	
	Consider feasibility of web chat.	2022	SI
	Improve e-Business functionality.	2023-24	
	Investigate opportunities for using notification and alert systems, social media and messenger apps as a supported service channel.	2022	
Undertake regular user experience testing with customers and implement identified improvements.	2021-24		
Reduce reliance on paper	Capture customer requests directly into the required systems.	2021-22	SI & CE
	Simplify and standardise paper-based forms.	2021-22	CE & LT
	Provide electronic receipts and invoices.	2022	SI & CE
	Promote website, electronic newsletters, email and social media channels for information.	2021-24	CE
	Integrate fact sheet content into website as print-friendly content and print as required.	2021-22	CE
Customer Request Management improvements	Review and cleanse CRM membership and events, reconfigure to have consistent templates (acknowledgement, progress update and completion) and simplify proformas.	2021-22	SI & CE
	Provide afterhours service provider access to lodge requests.	2023	
Process improvements	Simplify processes linked to common request types and customise information to support.	2022	CE & LT

5.3 Access and inclusion

Goal: Our customers can access our services and information from anywhere, anytime and in a way that suits their individual requirements and preferences. We respect and respond to our customers' needs for equitable access and inclusion.

Strategy	Action	Priority	Responsibility
Language support	Incorporate website translation options.	2021	CE
	Create a register of staff who speak languages other than English and are willing and available to offer support services.	2021	CE & PC
Service locations dispersed across the region	Provide face-to-face opportunities for customer services linked to existing service locations (e.g. libraries and information centres) and integrate where feasible.	2022-23	LT
Accessible services	Upgrade facilities and contact methods to meet contemporary access requirements.	2022-23	LT
24/7 service and response	Provide afterhours and online contact methods.	2021	CE
Customer engagement	Seek feedback, monitor trends, analyse data and provide timely updates and opportunities for improvement to business areas and management.	2021-24	CE

Acronyms	
ELT	Executive Leadership Team
LT	Leadership Team
CE	Communication & Engagement Section
PC	People & Culture Section
SI	Systems & Information Section

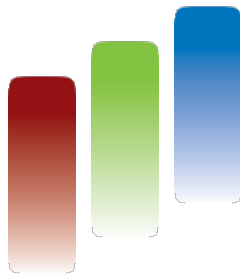
6. Responsibilities

Customer experience is everyone's responsibility and we will hold each other accountable in our service commitment.

We need the support of all staff and elected members to provide customer-centric services. Managers, coordinators and supervisors have a high degree of responsibility to lead and actively guide teams in developing a customer-centric culture.

Opportunities to understand customer satisfaction, identify and assess the effectiveness of our services against agreed benchmarks, and adapt to changing customer needs will be regularly reviewed by the Leadership and Executive Leadership teams. We will proactively acknowledge successes and address unsatisfactory performance.

The Coordinator Communication & Engagement is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this strategy.



Live, discover and invest in a Tablelands community



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