



# CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

2025 - 2028



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY.

Gilgandra is known as a “meeting place” between three Aboriginal nations – **Wiradjuri, Gamilaroi (Gamilaraay, Kamilaroi) and Wailwan** – and we proudly continue to be a meeting place for family, friends, locals and visitors alike.

Gilgandra Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we live, work and play. We pay our respects to our Elders past, present and emerging, and thank them for the contribution they have made, and continue to make, in the cultural identity of our nation.





# CONTENTS

<b>Message From The General Manager</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>Importance Of Customer Service</b>	<b>05</b>
Why Customer Service Matters	06
Roles And Responsibilities Of Who Delivers Customer Service	07
How The Strategy Relates To Other Council Plans And Strategies	08
<b>Our Customers</b>	<b>09</b>
Who Our Customers Are	10
How Our Customers Interact With Council	11
<b>Our Customer Service Purpose And Vision</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Our Strategic Actions</b>	<b>14</b>
1. Close The Loop	16
2. Make It Easy	17
3. Keep Everyone Informed	18
4. Be A Customer-Centric Council	19
<b>Roadmap Of Actions</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Measuring Implementation</b>	<b>24</b>
‘Voice Of Customer’ (VoC) Framework	25
How We Will Gather VoC Feedback	26
Analysing Data And Reporting & Governance	27
How We Will Measure Success	28
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>29</b>
How Customers Can Get Involved	30
Moving Forward	31

# MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Customer service in local government has traditionally been provided reactively with little choice or innovation in processes and service delivery models, leaving a general feeling that local government is difficult and slow to deal with.

Gilgandra Shire Council is acutely aware of these perceptions and realises that in order to create a welcoming, responsive organisation, we need to work with our people and our customers to make it easier, friendlier and faster to do business with us.

This Customer Service Strategy details our commitment to be a customer-focused organisation and provides a framework for us to deliver services in a way that places the customer at the centre of everything we do.

We intend to listen to, respond and collaborate with our community. This will be achieved by innovating and investing in processes, technology and people and by putting the customer first to deliver transparent services.



**DAVID NEEVES**  
General Manager

This strategy has been modelled on the insights gathered through engagement with our staff, Councillors and customers. We also relied on research, survey observations and internal metrics to inform this strategy and the actions within.

This strategy is one of many that leads Council in its pursuits to grow our population and cement Gilgandra as a place to live, enjoy and grow.

A photograph of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a striped shirt and sunglasses on her head, smiling while holding a young girl. The girl has white face paint with star patterns on her cheeks and is wearing a floral dress. They are standing in front of a large, decorated Christmas tree with warm white lights and red and gold ornaments. In the background, a sign reads "Gilgandra Community Plaza". Other people are visible in the background, including a person in a Santa hat. The bottom half of the image has a green overlay with white text.

# Gilgandra Community Plaza

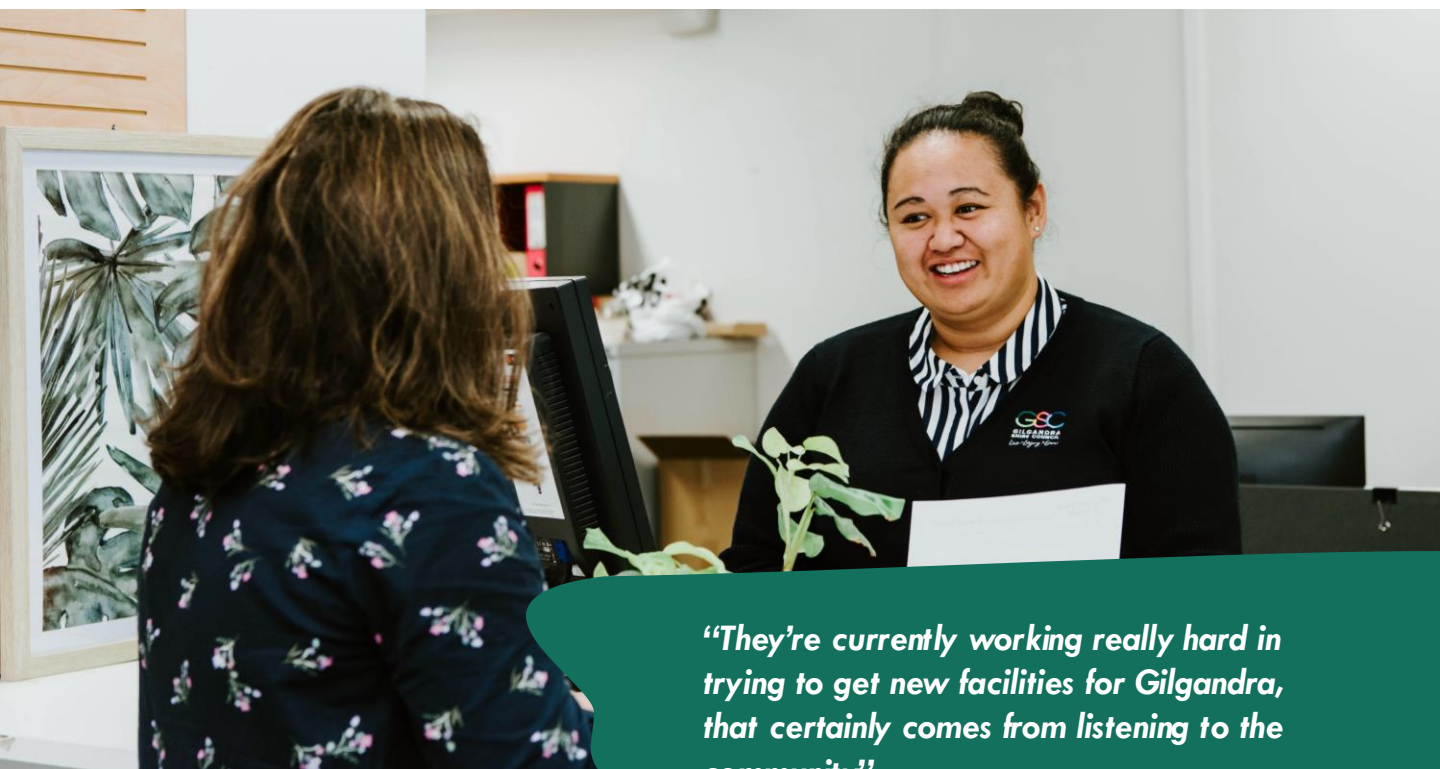
**Importance of Customer  
Service**

# WHY CUSTOMER SERVICE MATTERS

Customer service is the assistance, support, and experience we provide to anyone who interacts with Gilgandra Shire Council. It encompasses every touchpoint, from in-person encounters to online interactions, phone calls, written communications, and service delivery. Delivering exceptional customer service is paramount to building trust for our community.

Great customer service isn't just about efficiency – it's about building trust. Through feedback from our community, we know that exceptional service can:

- Help people feel recognised, respected and valued
- Strengthen community connection through open, two-way communication
- Improve satisfaction with Council services by making it easier to get things done
- Encourage the community to engage more actively with Council initiatives and programs



*“They’re currently working really hard in trying to get new facilities for Gilgandra, that certainly comes from listening to the community”*

Council Customer

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WHO DELIVERS CUSTOMER SERVICE

At Gilgandra Shire Council, customer service extends beyond our frontline staff. Our community members experience varying levels of service depending on who they interact with, highlighting the need for consistent customer focus across all Council roles.

Our customers have diverse needs and expectations. From those who prefer face-to-face interactions to those who use digital channels, or business owners seeking practical support to rural residents concerned about road maintenance. Understanding these different motivations and preferences is crucial when designing services that deliver exceptional experiences.

For our Customer Service Strategy to succeed, it must be woven into every aspect of Council operations, with genuine commitment across all departments. Improving customer experience requires both leadership from the top, with managers who champion its importance, and engagement from all staff who embrace this responsibility, regardless of whether they directly face customers or work behind the scenes.

A truly customer-focused approach responds to community needs, respects diverse preferences, and ensures nobody feels overlooked or ignored. By making customer service everyone's responsibility, we create a Council that genuinely serves all members of our community.

*"Each and every Council employee is responsible for customer service"*

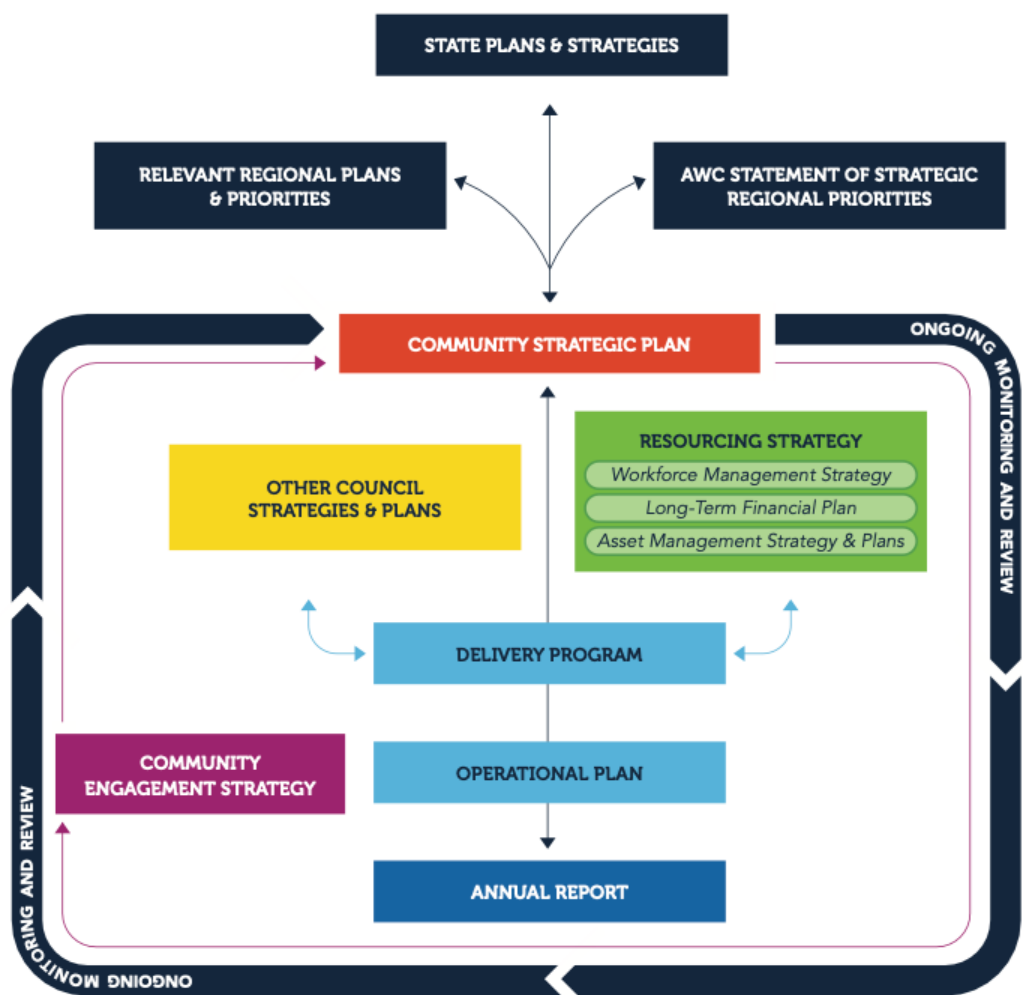
Councillor



# HOW THE STRATEGY RELATES TO OTHER COUNCIL PLANS AND STRATEGIES

The Customer Service Strategy is an essential component within Gilgandra Shire Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework.

This strategy does not operate in isolation, rather, it complements and reinforces the Community Strategic Plan while aligning with broader Council priorities. By establishing customer service standards and approaches that reflect community needs identified through consultation, this strategy helps to ensure that all council services are delivered with consistency and quality.





Our Customers

# WHO OUR CUSTOMERS ARE

When we refer to customers, we include everyone who interacts with Gilgandra Shire Council. This encompasses residents, ratepayers, tenants, workers, business owners, traders, developers, community groups, visitors, suppliers and contractors.

Our customer base is diverse, representing a wide variety of backgrounds and needs. We use the term 'customer' inclusively to represent all these different groups who engage with Council services.



**4,305**  
people



**46 years**  
median age



**3.38**  
birth rate



**7.7%**  
tertiary  
education



**1,084**  
family  
households



**54.2%**  
of residents  
work full-time



**84.2%**  
of residents born  
in Australia



**\$1,149**  
median weekly  
household  
income

ABS Census Data 2021

# HOW OUR CUSTOMERS INTERACT WITH COUNCIL

Understanding how our customers prefer to engage with us is critical to shaping services that are accessible, responsive and aligned to community needs. In our recent 'Have Your Say' survey, 212 residents shared their experiences and preferences for interacting with Council. These insights provide a valuable snapshot of current engagement patterns and help guide improvements to ensure that every customer interaction is as easy, clear and effective as possible.

Below are some key statistics from residents who responded to the survey:



## Local Medical Centres/Dentists

most important facilities and services to LIVE



## Playgrounds & Sportsgrounds

most important facilities and services to ENJOY



## Tourism Promotion of Gilgandra

most important facilities and services to GROW



**56%**

prefer to hear about Council news through Council's social media



**31%**

visited Council facilities



**45%**

contacted Council by phone



**49%**

contacted Council in last 12 months (other than to make a payment)

the community of Gilgandra and  
united together to commemorate the  
ry of the Coo-ee March 1915-2015.

old participated in the numerous  
ld throughout the Centenary Year.

e forged and continue with friends  
family of the original Coo-ees.

lgandra's volunteerism and  
nunity spirit is alive and well.



# Our Customer Service Purpose and Vision

# CUSTOMER SERVICE PURPOSE AND VISION

## Our Purpose

We listen to,  
respond and  
collaborate with  
our community

## Our Vision

Together, we turn community  
voices into meaningful  
outcomes that put people at the  
centre of everything we do



# Our Strategic Actions

# OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

To stay true to our customer service purpose and bring our vision to life, we have built a clear strategic framework made up of four strategic actions. Each action is supported by targeted tasks and measures of success that Council will deliver over the next three years. The actions are recorded in the Community Strategic Plan and the tasks are detailed further in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan (DP/OP). Progress on the DP/OP is reported to Council on a quarterly basis, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Our four strategic actions are:



## 1. Close The Loop

Ensure every customer interaction is acknowledged, acted on, and closed with clarity and care.



## 2. Make It Easy

Simplify and streamline our services to make interactions as straightforward, accessible and consistent as possible.



## 3. Keep Everyone Informed

Keep our community connected and informed through clear, consistent and proactive communication.



## 4. Be A Customer-Centric Council

Embed a customer-centric mindset across the Council, ensuring that our culture, decisions and services reflect the needs of our community.



# 1. Close The Loop

Ensure every customer interaction is acknowledged, acted on, and closed with clarity and care.

## What we have heard

Residents shared their frustration at the lack of acknowledgement and follow-up after lodging customer service requests. Many spoke about sending emails or raising issues without any response, leading to feelings of being ignored. Some residents said they eventually gave up trying because they felt there was no point if Council would not respond. In-person contact provided better outcomes, but people want consistent service across all channels.

## What we will do

Building trust starts with ensuring every customer interaction is acknowledged and actioned with clarity and care. Stronger request tracking, regular updates, and closing the loop on all enquiries will create a more visible, responsive service experience. Through clear communication and consistent follow-through, Council will reinforce confidence and rebuild relationships with the community.

## We know we will be successful if

- A high percentage of customer requests are acknowledged and responded to within service standards.
- Follow-up actions are tracked and reported, with clear visibility of resolved versus outstanding requests.
- Customer feedback shows increased satisfaction with how their requests are managed and resolved.



## 2. Make It Easy

**Simplify and streamline our services to make interactions as straightforward, accessible and consistent as possible.**

### What we have heard

Customers told us that interacting with Council can feel confusing and inconsistent, depending on the process or who you know. Residents highlighted the need for clearer information, better accessibility, and easier ways to navigate services without feeling overwhelmed. They want processes to be streamlined, simple, and consistent across departments, without needing to chase for updates.

### What we will do

Simplifying the customer experience means removing unnecessary barriers and making services accessible to everyone. Council will focus on streamlining processes, improving service consistency, and designing customer pathways that are clear, straightforward, and centred on community needs.

### We know we will be successful if

- Traffic increases to the Council website and self-service usage increases.
- 100% of customers receive follow-up or closure communication on service requests.
- All customer service officers (CSO) demonstrate competency on systems and processes, reflected in probation reviews and operational reporting.



### 3. Keep Everyone Informed

Keep our community connected and informed through clear, consistent and proactive communication.

#### What we have heard

Residents often feel “left in the dark” about Council activities, service requests and decisions. Many expressed frustration that they provide feedback to the Council but never hear what happened as a result. Others noted that relying mainly on digital updates excludes community members who are not online. People want more open communication that explains the “why” behind decisions and ensures everyone, regardless of digital ability, stays informed.

#### What we will do

We will focus on sharing timely updates, providing meaningful context for decisions, and using a range of communication channels to ensure everyone in the community, whether online or offline, feels informed, respected, and connected. Delivering proactive, consistent communication will be a priority.

#### We know we will be successful if

- Regular training sessions are delivered to Council staff to build empathetic communication skills, with high participation rates.
- Customer surveys indicate improved satisfaction with the clarity and timeliness of Council communication.
- Communication is clear, timely, and consistent across all customer channels (online and offline).



## 4. Be A Customer-Centric Council

**Embed a customer-centric mindset across the Council, ensuring that our culture, decisions and services reflect the needs of our community.**

### What we have heard

Customers want a Council that genuinely listens, engages meaningfully, and adapts to different needs. Residents described a desire for more approachable conversations with Council, greater support for local businesses, and more inclusion for families and rural residents. There is a strong appetite for a Council culture that is more human, responsive, and connected to everyday community life.

### What we will do

Embedding a customer-centric mindset will be a shared responsibility across all levels of Council. Through strong leadership, staff empowerment, service excellence recognition, and a commitment to continuous improvement, Council will create a culture where community needs drive decision-making, service delivery, and innovation.

### We know we will be successful if

- Customer satisfaction scores improve, and regular feedback mechanisms are actively used.
- Customer experience metrics, such as "smiley face" surveys and feedback devices, are deployed and monitored at key service points.
- Progress against customer service actions is tracked and reported quarterly to Executive Leadership and T3 Managers.



# Roadmap of Actions

# ROADMAP OF ACTIONS

The implementation roadmap sets out a clear pathway of tasks that will help Council strengthen customer service across the organisation.

Each task in the roadmap is linked to one of the four strategic actions, ensuring that every step contributes to lifting the quality, consistency, and accessibility of customer interactions. While the roadmap outlines indicative timeframes and priorities, it also allows flexibility, encouraging teams to innovate, collaborate and adapt as needs evolve.

The roadmap is intended to keep momentum high, guiding day-to-day efforts while ensuring that the bigger picture remains firmly in focus. Delivering on these actions will require a whole-of-Council commitment, with every staff member playing a role in building a stronger, more customer-centric organisation.



***“It’s disappointing when things change after consultation and there’s no explanation why.”***

Council Customer

## Strategic Action 1: Close The Loop

*(This action corresponds to Item 4.2.3.1 in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan)*

Task		Timeframe
1.1	<b>Establish customer service delivery expectations through key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor customer service response times and resolution rates</b> Set and track measurable targets to improve accountability, identify areas for improvement, and ensure timely, consistent service delivery across the Council.	2025-2026
1.2	<b>Define and embed clear customer service standards across the Council</b> Ensure every customer request is acknowledged, response timeframes are clearly communicated, and there is a transparent escalation process in place for complex enquiries.	2025-2026
1.3	<b>Develop a real-time customer service dashboard for internal and customer use</b> Provide staff with a clear line of sight into customer requests, tracking their status and resolution to help close the loop more efficiently and to proactively follow up.	2026-2028

## Strategic Action 2: Make It Easy

*(This action corresponds to Item 4.2.3.2 in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan)*

Task		Timeframe
2.1	<b>Document all Council service request processes and procedures</b> Ensure internal consistency and reduce duplication by capturing current workflows, responsibilities, and handoffs across teams.	2025-2026
2.2	<b>Deliver mandatory training for all staff to understand customer service processes and standards</b> Focus on consistent use of processes, forms, templates, key service details, and empathetic communication to ensure residents receive the same high standard of service across all interactions.	2025-2026
2.3	<b>Create and maintain an internal customer service directory</b> Support staff in efficiently reaching the right contact to address customer needs, reducing delays and unnecessary hand-offs.	2025-2026
2.4	<b>Review and update all customer-facing forms, letters, and communications to ensure they use plain, accessible language and consistent Council branding</b> Use simple language, easy-to-read formats, and consistent branding across departments to help customers understand information and interact with Council more easily.	2025-2026
2.5	<b>Contribute to updating and enhancing Council's website to improve usability and ensure a more user-friendly experience for all visitors</b> Improve navigation, simplify language, and introduce a self-service customer portal that includes a unique tracking number for service requests.	2026-2027
2.6	<b>Contribute to Council's phone system upgrade project to enhance accessibility and improve responsiveness to customer enquiries</b> Enhance the customer experience by ensuring calls are handled efficiently and routed to the right team the first time.	2026-2028

## Strategic Action 3: Keep Everyone Informed

(This action corresponds to Item 4.2.3.3 in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan)

Task		Timeframe
3.1	<b>Introduce simple and accessible ways for customers to provide feedback</b> Use tools like tablets, web banners or email signature prompts to make it quick and easy for customers to share their service experiences.	2025-2026
3.2	<b>Promote what the Council is delivering each month through local and online channels</b> Showcase the top highlights of what the Council has addressed based on requested services for that month in relevant channels (such as local newspapers, Council websites, social media, and notice boards).	2025-2028
3.3	<b>Enhance community understanding of Council services and responsibilities by providing clear and accessible information</b> Support residents in knowing what the Council can assist with to foster informed expectations.	2025-2028
3.4	<b>Ensure consistent and coordinated messaging across all communication channels</b> Align language, tone, and information across newsletters, social media, printed materials, and the website to ensure consistency across all channels.	2025-2028
3.5	<b>Develop personalised omnichannel communication strategies using data from the customer relationship management (CRM) system</b> Identify preferred communication channels of community members and store the data centrally to tailor communications and improve engagement strategies.	2026-2027

## Strategic Action 4: Be A Customer-Centric Council

(This action corresponds to Item 4.2.3.4 in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan)

Task		Timeframe
4.1	<b>Provide ongoing customer service training to embed a customer-centric mindset</b> Provide staff with practical tools, empathy techniques, and communication skills to confidently and consistently support the community.	2025-2028
4.2	<b>Implement internal feedback mechanisms to regularly gather staff insights</b> Regularly gather staff feedback on customer interactions and internal processes to guide improvements and promote a positive workplace culture.	2025-2028
4.3	<b>Reimagine community consultation sessions to be more inclusive and welcoming</b> Tailor engagement methods to better reach people in rural towns and underrepresented groups, ensuring every voice can be heard.	2025-2028
4.4	<b>Recognise staff who provide outstanding customer service</b> Celebrate individuals or teams who go above and beyond to deliver positive customer experiences, reinforcing behaviours that matter.	2025-2028
4.5	<b>Adopt a mindset of continuous improvement across customer service</b> Regularly review what is working and where changes are needed to ensure Council keeps pace with evolving community needs.	2025-2028



# Measuring Implementation

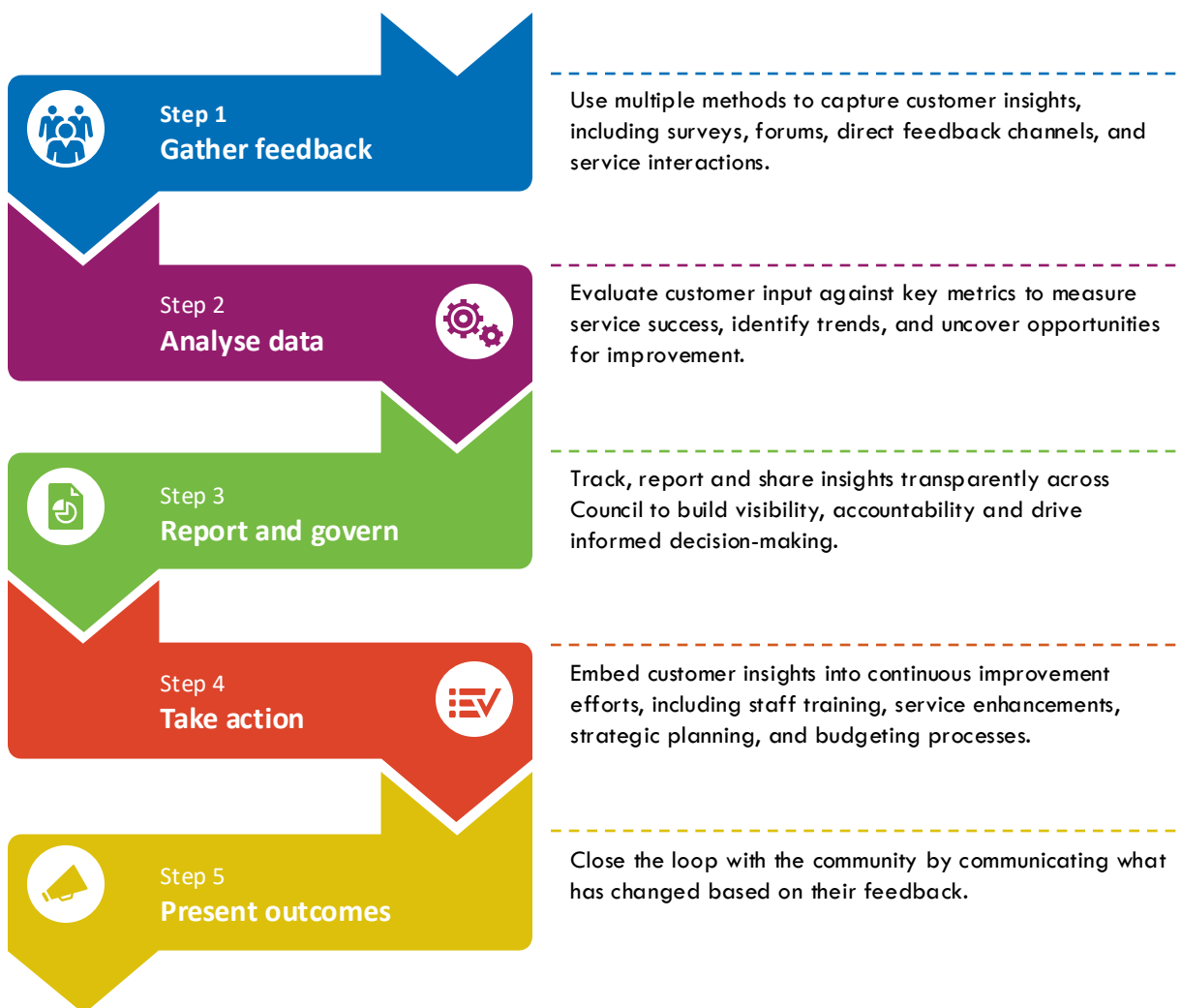


# 'VOICE OF CUSTOMER' FRAMEWORK

## What is a 'Voice of Customer' Framework

A 'Voice of Customer' (VoC) framework is all about listening to customers and using their feedback to improve services. It is key to this Customer Service Strategy as it helps ensure decisions are based on what people actually want and need. By regularly gathering feedback, Council can spot issues, make improvements, and prioritise the things that matter most to the community. This ongoing process builds trust, keeps people engaged, and ensures services stay in line with customer expectations, both now and in the future.

## How Gilgandra Shire Council will capture the 'Voice of Customer'



# HOW WE WILL GATHER VoC FEEDBACK

Method	Description	Frequency	Who is responsible
<b>Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) Survey</b>	Deploy survey to measure the customer satisfaction post interaction with customer service	Ongoing after every interaction that involves a CSO	Customer Service Officers
<b>Complaints and Feedback Form</b>	Online form for people to submit feedback or complaints	Ongoing	Customer Service Officers
<b>Social Media Monitoring</b>	Utilise tools to analyse sentiment, complaints and opportunities based on social media posts	Quarterly	Marketing & Communications
<b>Councillor Input</b>	Meetings with Councillors to gather their input on customer service and personal experience from their interactions	Bi-annually	General Manager
<b>Cross Functional Internal Workshops</b>	Staff to capture customer sentiment and feedback based on what they are hearing (through informal channels not captured by other methods)	Bi-annually / Annually	Executive Leadership Team and T3 Managers
<b>'Have Your Say' Community Insight Survey</b>	Online survey deployed to wider audience to gather community insights, sentiment, and themes	Annually	Executive Leadership Team
<b>Community Consultation Sessions</b>	In-person forums to gather community insights, sentiment, themes and feedback based on Council performance	Annually	Executive Leadership Team and T3 Managers

*"I asked the Council to put a bin near the post office because people were throwing junk mail everywhere. I just asked them, and they did it. As I said, the Council can't fix anything if they don't know about it."*

Council Customer

# ANALYSING DATA

Once the 'Voice of Customer' feedback is gathered, the next step is to analyse it systematically using the following methods to measure success and identify actionable insights.

- **Sentiment Analysis:** Use tools to track customer emotions and identify recurring themes, pain points, and opportunities for improvement.
- **Root Cause Analysis:** Identify the underlying causes of negative feedback and prioritise issues based on their impact on service quality.
- **Customer Journey Mapping:** Map the customer journey and link customer feedback to the stages in the journey to pinpoint friction points and areas to improve.
- **Trend Identification:** Regularly review feedback data to identify positive and negative trends, ensuring services meet community needs.

## REPORTING & GOVERNANCE

To ensure Council adapts and continuously improves customer service delivery, it is imperative we monitor and measure performance regularly through:

- **Regular Reporting & Dashboards:** Create dashboards that provide real-time insights into customer satisfaction and service request statuses. Regularly review these reports to track progress.
- **Closing the Feedback Loop:** Communicate back to customers about how their feedback has influenced service changes or led to resolutions, building trust and engagement.
- **Actionable Insights:** Use insights to inform strategic decisions, service design, and process improvements. Ensure that feedback is embedded into decision-making across departments.
- **Performance Reviews:** Regularly assess the VoC framework's effectiveness and adjust methods and actions to align with customer needs and service goals.

# HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

Delivering a stronger customer service experience requires ongoing reflection and improvement. To ensure we stay on track, Council is committed to regularly measuring the progress of our actions and the impact of our efforts. We will monitor outcomes against clear metrics, share updates across the organisation, and use insights to inform continuous improvement. Measuring success not only keeps us accountable, but it also ensures we are consistently evolving to meet the needs and expectations of our community.

Below are some key metrics we will use to measure success:

- **Customer Satisfaction (CSAT):** A measure of how satisfied customers are with a specific service or interaction.
- **Net Promoter Score (NPS):** Gauges the likelihood of customers recommending Council services to others, helping identify areas for improvement.
- **Customer Effort Score (CES):** Measures the ease of a customer's interaction with the Council, identifying pain points where customers may encounter difficulty in resolving issues.
- **Resolution Time:** Tracks the average time it takes to resolve customer complaints and requests, helping to measure responsiveness and efficiency in service delivery.
- **Repeat Complaints:** Tracks how often customers report the same issue, indicating areas where systemic improvement may be needed to prevent recurring problems.

*"I'm absolutely thrilled and grateful that the Council has taken on board the disability and aged care services. If they had left it to the private sector, I fear those places wouldn't even be open. Council stepped up, and it shows...people even move here for the services."*

Council Customer



Next Steps

# HOW CUSTOMERS CAN GET INVOLVED

We know that great customer service does not come from assumptions. It comes from ongoing dialogue with the people who use our services every day.

There are a range of ways customers can have their say and help shape how Gilgandra Shire Council delivers services.

These include:

- Participating in surveys, such as our annual 'Have Your Say' survey, to share your experiences and expectations.
- Attending Community Consultation sessions to contribute ideas and suggest feedback on key Council services and decisions.
- Sharing feedback anytime through online forms or by speaking with one of our customer service officers or Councillors.
- Engaging with us on social media, where we regularly listen to community sentiment and respond to emerging issues.

Whether you're giving detailed feedback or offering a quick comment, every interaction helps Council do better. By staying connected with our community, we can continuously improve, respond to evolving needs, and build services that work for everyone.

*"We like to communicate to the Council because there are opportunities for them to do better"*

Council Customer



# MOVING FORWARD

The purpose, vision, strategic actions and tasks outlined in this Customer Service Strategy are shaped by the current experiences, needs and expectations of Gilgandra’s community. As improvements are made and as community expectations evolve, it is important that Council remains connected through ongoing engagement and feedback.

Regular checkpoints will be held to assess customer feedback, track our progress, and confirm that our strategic priorities continue to align with what matters most to our residents. Customer satisfaction, service performance, and emerging insights will guide any necessary refinements.

This Strategy is intended to be a living document – flexible to adapt to changing community needs, strategic priorities, and new opportunities for service improvement.

***“Council is a service organisation, that's our bread and butter, and not only do we have to deliver results, but we also have to be able to communicate them clearly to the community”***

Councillor





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