



Customer Action Plan

2021-2024

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Introduction

For the purpose of this document, a customer is defined as an individual, or group, that engages with the Heritage Council. This definition includes internal customers, employees and stakeholders whom we recognise as both the providers and recipients of customer service.

Our mission in the Heritage Council is governed by the Heritage Acts 1995 and 2018 which require us to propose policies and priorities that identify, protect, preserve, and enhance Ireland's national heritage. We are charged with:

- promoting interest, education, knowledge, pride, and care of our national heritage and supporting appreciation and enjoyment of our heritage.
- cooperating with public authorities, education bodies and others in the promotion of our functions.
- advancing the coordination of all activities related to our functions.

We aim to ensure that Ireland's heritage is managed and conserved to enrich the lives of people now and for the future. We will continue to promote and nurture our heritage as a source of personal, community and national well-being.

Providing an efficient and courteous service to all our customers is central to achieving these aims and delivering the strategic objectives as set out in *Heritage at the Heart: Heritage Council Strategy 2018–2022*:

- Advance national heritage priorities
- Nurture belonging
- Ensure a vibrant heritage sector

We are committed to providing you, our customers, with excellent customer service in accordance with the 12 principles of quality customer services. This plan sets out, in respect of each principle, how we intend to achieve this. It sets out clearly the type of service you can expect from us and how it will be monitored.

We will constantly strive to improve our services. To this end we will regularly consult with our stakeholders, internal and external, to see how we are meeting the commitments in our Customer Action Plan and to identify areas for improvement. Our annual reports will also provide updates on our progress in implementing the plan.



Principle 1 – Quality service standards

Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

Actions

- Ensure that our Customer Charter is clearly displayed in our offices and on our website.
- Communicate our Customer Action Plan and service delivery standards to all our staff.
- Promote and increase awareness of the 12 principles of quality customer service set out by the government among our staff and customers.

Principle 2 – Equality and diversity

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community). Identify and work to eliminate barriers to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and for those facing geographic, literary, visual, or auditory, or any other barriers to service.

Actions

- Ensure that our grants programmes are accessible to all the groups covered by the equality legislation and that the appropriate level of service is available.
- Promote staff awareness of equality and diversity through dissemination of policy and procedural information.
- Provide equality and diversity training to all board members and staff.

Principle 3 – Physical access

Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

Actions

- Ensure our offices are maintained to a standard that meets business needs, are acceptable to our customers and staff, and comply with health, safety and accessibility standards.
- Ensure a high standard at our reception area for receiving our customers.



- Ensure a high standard of safety and accessibility at all our events both internally and externally.

Principle 4 – Information

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on Public Service websites follows the guidelines on web publication. Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

Actions

- Ensure that our information distribution channels are kept as up-to-date as possible and maintain pace with technological developments and innovations in media and communications.
- Continue to develop our website as a key information resource for our customers, as well as promote a greater level of interaction with our stakeholders.
- Comply with the statutory requirements in relation to the processing of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 (FOI), Access to Information on the Environment Regulations (AIE) and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Principle 5 – Timeliness and courtesy

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer. Provide contact details in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

Actions

- Ensure that all our customers are treated with courtesy and that all enquiries are dealt with promptly and efficiently.
- Ensure that we provide full contact details on all our written and email communication.
- Provide alternative contact options when staff are required to work from home.
- Aim to continue to reduce the amount of late payments.
- Ensure that all staff provide their names when answering telephone calls.
- Ensure that voicemail and out of office messages are used when staff are unavailable.



Principle 6 – Complaints

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

Actions

- Publish our customer complaints procedure clearly on our website.
- Raise awareness of our customer complaints procedure among staff.
- Ensure complaints are dealt with in an open, accountable, and accessible manner and in accordance with prescribed procedures.

Principle 7 – Appeals

Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

Actions

- Publish our appeals procedure clearly on our website.
- Raise awareness of our customer appeals procedure among staff.
- Ensure appeals are dealt with in an open, accountable and accessible manner and in accordance with prescribed procedures.

Principle 8 – Consultation and evaluation

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

Actions

- We will consult with all our stakeholders in relation to developing, delivering and reviewing our services.
- We will use this feedback to improve our services and address areas of concern.



Principle 9 – Choice

Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice and quality of delivery.

Actions

- We will provide a range of options for accessing our services including contact by telephone, email or via our website.
- We will make full use of new and emerging technologies to broaden the choice of services available to our customers.

Principle 10 – Official languages equality

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

Actions

- Ensure key documents will be published in English and Irish.
- Ensure every effort is made to accommodate customers who telephone, visit or write to the Heritage Council and who wish to conduct their business in Irish.
- Encourage staff to avail of opportunities to use and improve their level of Irish.

Principle 11 – Better coordination

Foster a more coordinated and integrated approach to the delivery of public services.

Actions

- Develop our partnership with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage other government departments, local government and with agencies, organisations, and individuals within the heritage sector.



Principle 12 – Internal customer

Ensure that employees are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted on service delivery issues.

Actions

- We will continue to enhance internal communications by implementing our internal communications plan.
- The Heritage Council will support the training and development needs of each staff member, and training requirements will be identified through our Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).
- We will continue to promote collaboration and consultation on our service delivery model through regular staff and team meetings, using emerging technologies to support staff who are working remotely.



Measuring and evaluating performance

We will employ a range of mechanisms to measure and evaluate our performance against the standards set out in our Customer Charter, to ensure that we continue to deliver the highest levels of service to our customers.

In monitoring our performance, we will:

- carry out customer surveys with our customers.
- benchmark our performance against previous results.
- seek feedback and suggestions from our customers on ways in which we can enhance our service provision and delivery.
- regularly review the implementation of actions at management team meetings.