Office of the Auditor General
City of Ottawa

Audit of 3-1-1 - Highlights



Why we did this audit

3-1-1 is the City's centralized, non-emergency customer service system and serves as the primary point of contact for clients seeking municipal services, information, and support. As the volume of inquiries continues to grow and clients increasingly use a variety of channels to interact with the City, it is important that the service delivery model remains responsive, efficient, and provides a consistent client experience. This audit was undertaken to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of 3-1-1 operations, while considering the prudent use of public funds.

What we found

The audit found that overall, 3-1-1 is fulfilling its mandate as the City's centralized customer service function. Service requests reviewed were generally closed appropriately and completed within established service timelines.

However, opportunities exist to improve service delivery and efficiency. The audit found that 3-1-1 is not currently meeting its public email response standards and that the average speed to answer calls is higher than benchmarked municipalities. 3-1-1 also experienced a significant increase in abandoned calls. These findings can all impact the service reputation of 3-1-1 and result in frustrated clients. The audit noted that the most efficient way for a client to submit a routine service request is online as it eliminates the need to speak with an agent and should be further promoted by 3-1-1.

The audit identified inconsistencies in how client interactions are handled, including the communication of service standards and other key information to clients. It was found that service standards are maintained across multiple sources and are not applied consistently across service areas, increasing the risk that clients receive inaccurate or inconsistent information which can contribute to varying customer experiences and additional follow-up inquiries.

Finally, while service requests were generally processed appropriately, formal expectations for documenting work completed and closing service requests have not been consistently established across service areas. This creates a risk of incomplete records and inconsistent information available to support client inquiries.

We made nine recommendations to ensure that:

- Clients are encouraged to use the most efficient service channels and online self-service options continue to expand;
- Performance targets are supported by reliable data, informed by benchmarking, and accompanied by appropriate public reporting practices;
- Client interactions are handled consistently, and agents have the tools and training needed to provide accurate information;
- Consistent expectations for documenting and closing service requests are established and promoted across service areas;
- The causes of increasing call abandonment rates are better understood and addressed to improve customer service, and
- Service standards are maintained through a single source of information, are clearly understood, and are communicated consistently to clients.

For more details on this report please visit our website.
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