



CLIENT SERVICE CHARTER TECHNICAL BRIEF



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1. Context

Improved public service delivery and accountability have increasingly turned out to be important issues in Local Governance processes at the Global level. In Zimbabwe, there has been noteworthy progress, including the introduction of the citizen's charter by local authorities. Client service charter (CSC) provides information about what people can expect in a facility's services; what is expected of clients and service providers. Citizens all over the world perceive local authorities as service providers rather than mere regulators. This perception has created growing expectations among citizens about how and in what manner their local authorities and other service providers should serve them. To meet this perception and expectation of the citizens, various initiatives are being taken and implemented by the local authorities so that they improve the quality of service to the public.

Most local authorities are often accused of possessing an administrative culture that is very inward-looking. This has led to the development of service delivery charters that are not informed by citizen needs and priorities. Most of the representatives from the demand side are of the view that many service providers believe that they know best what is good for them. Service delivery charters provide for the establishment of a platform for service providers to consult and constructively engage with service users and the modalities of its delivery are viewed as convenient and acceptable by the citizens. However, in its programming, the Civic Form on Human Development (CFHD) has noted that there is a disparity between what users expect and what public officials think they expect which has resulted in expectations gaps between the demand and the supply sides.



Client Service Charter development in Chikomba District. Picture Courtesy of CFHD.

In rural local authorities of Zimbabwe, several challenges have been reported that affect the use of Client Service Charters which include duty bearers not adhering to the charter, lack of time on the side of community members to read and understand the charter, and socio-cultural issues. Feedback sessions conducted by the CFHD with some community representatives revealed that some of them had not heard of the charter, indicating that its distribution was inadequate, due to the production of inadequate copies, lack of implementation strategy, lack of advocacy and monitoring plan. Lack of proper awareness about the CSC among residents is a great barrier to its fruitful implementation. Such situations have resulted in the communities being unable to complain or voice a concern. The CFHD has been supporting rural local authorities in the development of CSC that are inclusive of a wide range of stakeholders and socio-economic groups. The process has also supported the alignment of the service charters to national priorities and local strategic plans.



Client Service Charter Development Training in Makonde. Picture courtesy of CFHD

2. Rationale

Civic Forum on Human Development and its partners have been capacitating Rural District Councils and the district stakeholders on the development of responsive client service charters. District stakeholders such as Community Based Organisations (CBOs), councillors and traditional leaders will use acquired skills to lobby and advocate for the integration of priorities identified through the Community Based Planning (CBP) into council strategic plans through full council resolutions and participatory budgeting processes. Multiple platforms for citizen monitoring of service delivery will be created through agreed social service charters with a diverse range of groups in the target areas of work. Duty bearers, Civic Society Organisations (CSOs) and CBOs would use the development of service charters as a basis for building durable social accountability relationships. From the lessons generated in conducting the activity under the social accountability project, the CFHD has developed a brief on the development of service charters.

3. Objectives of the Client Service Charter Technical Brief

- ❖ To share information on the importance of having a Client Service Charter
- ❖ To unpack the components of the client service charter
- ❖ To elaborate simple steps that an organisation can take in order to come up with a standard clients service charter

4. What is a Client Service Charter?

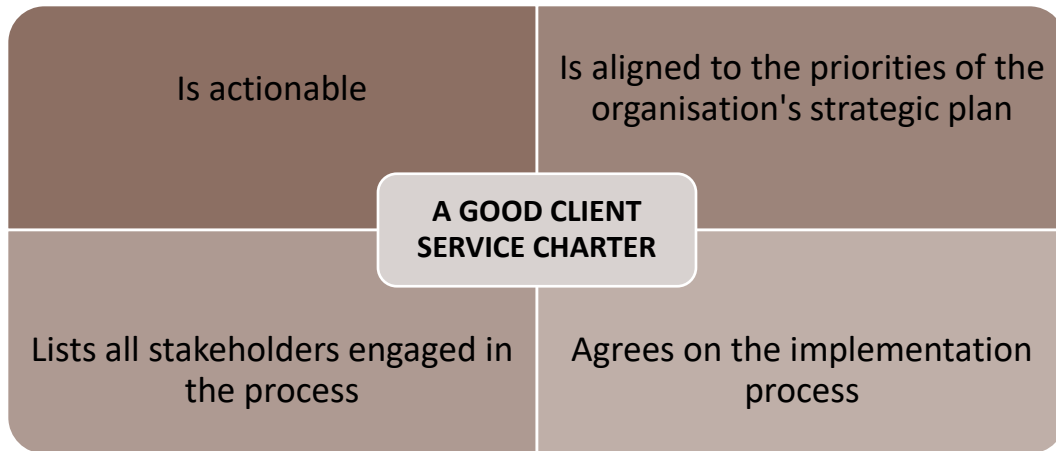
A Client Service Charter (CSC) is a written commitment by an institution with its clients. It describes all the services an institution offers, set service standards, time for processing such services, duties and responsibilities of both clients and the institution. It also sets out feedback mechanisms including a system of handling public complaints. CSCs are public documents developed by an institution in consultation with its clients, staff and stakeholders that continually grows with an organisation.

5. Purpose of CSCs

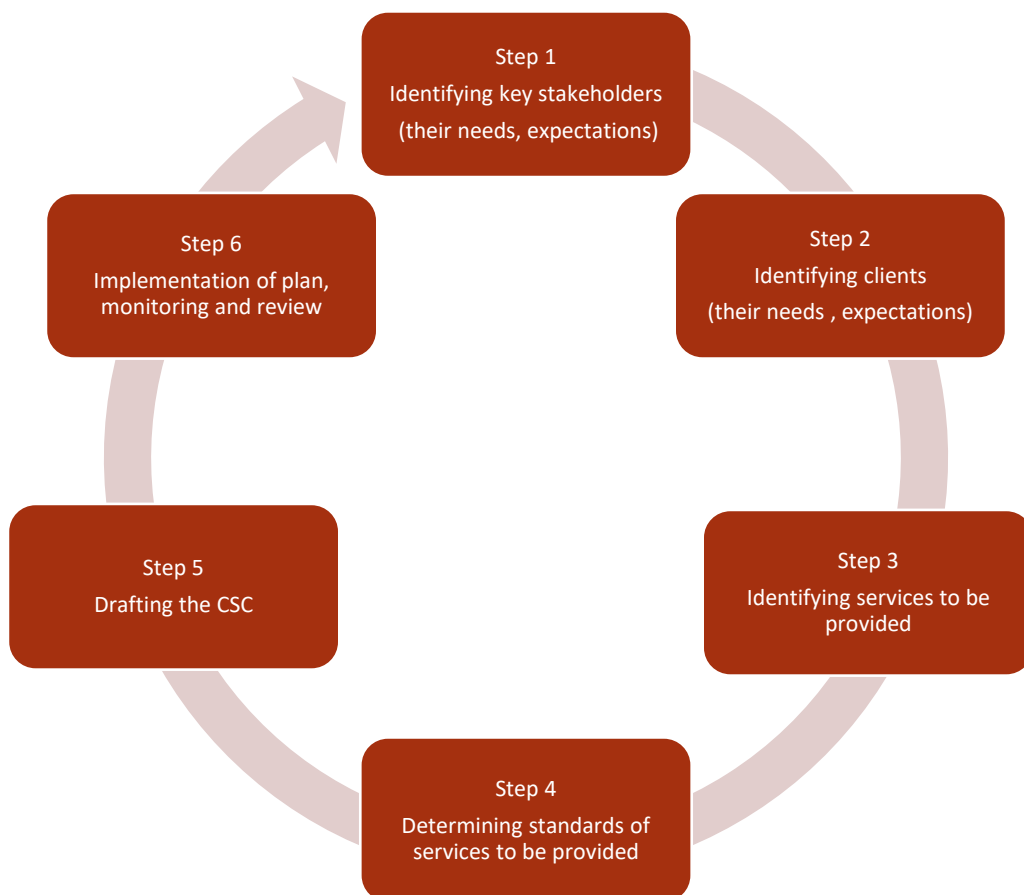
- ❖ Creating awareness on the type, availability and quality of services offered by public institutions.
- ❖ Creating culture change in the public services by institutionalizing the customer focused approach.
- ❖ Improve service delivery to the public.
- ❖ Increasing accountability and responsiveness of the public officials.

6. Main Components of a Typical CSC

- ❖ It sets out types of **services** the institution will provide according to its **clients'** requirements.
- ❖ It sets out **service standards** the institution will provide in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness, relationships, among many other things identified as critical.
- ❖ Created based on **widespread consultation** with different users of the services, staff who provide services and other stakeholders who have an interest in what the organization is doing.
- ❖ Sets out clear **roles** and **responsibilities** of service users and service providers.
- ❖ States clearly how and where service users can make **complaints** and obtain **remedies** when they do not get the right level of service to their expectations.
- ❖ Written in simple and plain language easily **understood by the public** and free of technical jargons with clearly defined terms.
- ❖ Widely understood, accepted and **internalized** within the institution.



7. Six Steps to Developing a Good CSC



8. Structure of Typical CSCs

Name of the Institution	• This is for identification of the local authority • Should include logo
Vision and Mission Statements	• Local Authority to state its vision in line with National Agenda • Mission should provide the direction that the LA is taking its business
Core Values	• State the principles that the Local Authority shall abide with • Examples are professionalism, transparency, accountability
Purpose of the Charter	• This statement will give information to clients on why the charter is important to them and for the institution.
Types of Clients	• This will spell out all categories of clients that the institution has. • These clients have been identified through the client profiling process.
Services Offered by the Institution	• Local authority to state all the types of services offered by the institution.
Service Standards	• Set standards of all services to be provided by the institution that the clients can expect, monitor and review performance against.
Institutional Responsibility to the Clients	• Public institutions should state clearly the approach they will follow to ensure that the services delivered are commensurate with the client's expectations for value and satisfaction.
Clients Rights and Responsibilities	• The Charter should state the rights and responsibilities of clients when seeking services e.g. client rights to privacy and confidentiality, access services and facilities in a manner that meets their need, lodge a complaint appeal etc. Also clients have the responsibility to treat the Local Authority with courtesy and abide by any legal requirements and obligations in order to be eligible for the services sought.
Clients Feedback on Service Delivery	• The charter should encourage clients to provide feedback in the form of compliments, suggestions and complaints as means of improving service delivery. It should state how and to whom clients including those with special disabilities could provide feedback either in person by post, e-mail, Facebook or telephone.
Institutional Identity and Contact Details	• The institution should state clearly where the institution is located as well as available contacts for quick communication.

This information has been developed under the Social Accountability Project being implemented by Civic Forum on Human Development (CFHD) together with its partners Centre for Community Development Solutions (CCDS), Nhahunure Community Trust (NCT) and Lower Guruve Development Association (LGDA) in 8 rural local authorities namely Goromonzi, Chikomba, Murewa, Chegutu, Makonde, Muzarabani, Guruve and Mbire. The project is funded by the European Union. So far, the project has supported review of district service charters for Chegutu RDC, Muzarabani RDC, Makonde RDC and Chikomba RDC.

For More Information, Contact

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