



OFFICE OF THE
City Auditor

3-1-1 Call Centre Review

August 30, 2010

The Office of the City Auditor conducted
this project in accordance with the
*International Standards for the
Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*

3-1-1 Call Centre Review

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	i
1. Introduction	1
2. Background	1
3. Audit Objectives, Scope, & Methodology	3
3.1. Evolution of the 311 Call Centre	3
3.2. Current Operations	3
4. Observations and Analysis.....	4
4.1. Evolution of the 311 Call Centre	4
4.2. Current Operations	8
4.2.1. 311 Staffing and Training.....	9
4.2.2. Operational Performance.....	11
4.2.3. Roles and Responsibilities.....	14
4.2.4. Knowledge Management	16
4.2.5. Service Request Tracking.....	18
4.2.6. Performance Reporting.....	20
5. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	21

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3-1-1 Call Centre Review

Executive Summary

The Office of the City Auditor's 2010 Work Plan included an audit of the 311 Call Centre (311) which is an organizational unit in the Customer Information Services Area of the Corporate Services Department. 311 provides citizens with a single point of contact for City of Edmonton information, programs and services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In the first quarter of 2010, 311 answered 347,941 phone calls and 7,175 emails.

Delivery of 311 service is a joint responsibility. 311 is responsible for receiving calls and providing responses following scripts or guidelines approved by operational areas. Operational areas are responsible for providing 311 with accurate and complete information for the scripts and for responding to service requests communicated by 311 Agents.

At the time 311 was approved the performance target was set at 80% of calls being answered within 25 seconds. In the first half of 2009, less than a third of the calls were being answered within 25 seconds. During the third quarter, performance improved with 51% of the calls being answered in 25 seconds or less. During the fourth quarter the performance target was met. The number of staff or FTEs available to answer calls was the most critical factor impacting the initial performance of the 311 call centre.

We assessed current operations from six perspectives: staffing and training, operational performance, roles and responsibilities, knowledge management, service request tracking, and performance reporting. The assessment included the roles of both 311 and operational areas in addressing citizen requests and the impact on performance.

We have made two recommendations to improve delivery of services to citizens.

Key performance indicators show 311 is delivering service at the target level set prior to implementation, is delivering a high level of service compared to other municipal call centres, and that the level of service is being provided in an efficient manner. These indicators relate to 311 operations only and do not cover service provided by operational areas. Clear direction on service level reductions or a capital investment in state-of-the-art technology would be required to achieve any significant operating cost reductions.

One key performance indicator that is not currently used by 311 is customer feedback. Feedback can serve two purposes: first the information collected could be used to assess customer expectations and perceptions on overall services; and second, constructive feedback can enhance 311 Agent performance. We have made a recommendation that a process to collect customer feedback be established.

In addition to reviewing key performance indicators we assessed the maturity or current state of the 311 infrastructure and operations. The results of the assessment indicate that from the perspectives of the people (staffing levels, training, and work environment), process (call handling and call management) and tools (technology) 311 is fairly mature even though they have only been fully operational for just over a year. The area where we believe there is the greatest opportunity for improvement is in the definition and communication of roles, responsibilities, and processes that impact operational areas.

We noted that within 311, roles, responsibilities, and processes are documented and understood by staff. However, corporately, we observed that operational areas have differing opinions on roles, responsibilities, definitions, and process. The differing opinions can impact the quality of service citizens receive and the ability to monitor and report on activity. Specific areas of concern include:

- Maintenance of training materials and scripts that guide the dissemination of information to citizens,
- Inconsistent practices related to the management of citizen requests and inability to report on the status of requests, and
- Undefined corporate reporting requirements and inconsistencies in reporting.

The lack of corporate guidance can result in duplication of services and ineffective use of resources. We are recommending that corporate guidelines be developed that clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of both 311 and operational areas.

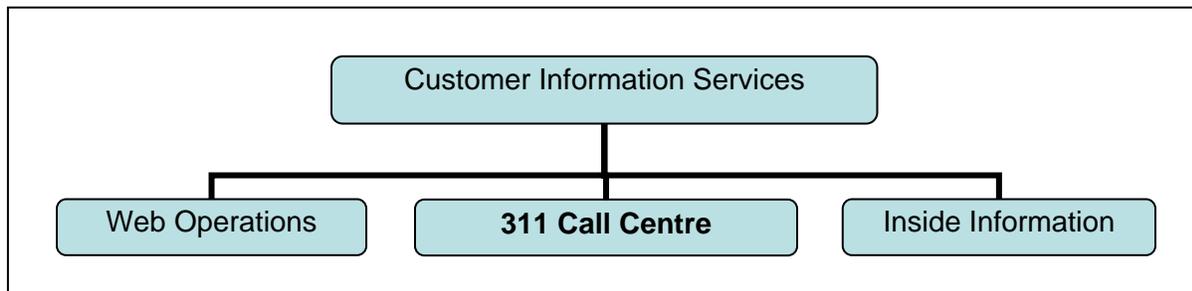
3-1-1 Call Centre Review

1. Introduction

The Office of the City Auditor's (OCA) 2010 Work Plan included an audit of the 311 Call Centre (311). 311 provides citizens with a single point of contact for City of Edmonton information, programs, and services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The 311 Call Centre is an organizational unit in the Customer Information Services Area of the Corporate Services Department.

Chart 1 – Customer Information Organization



2. Background

The centralized 311 Call Centre became fully operational on December 16, 2008. Migration of individual call centres to the 311 environment was staggered with the first areas completed in September 2007. Operating 24 hours per day, 365 days a year, 311 provides connectivity to citizens at their convenience. 311 is a common point of contact for 15 business areas providing information or support for more than 70 services.

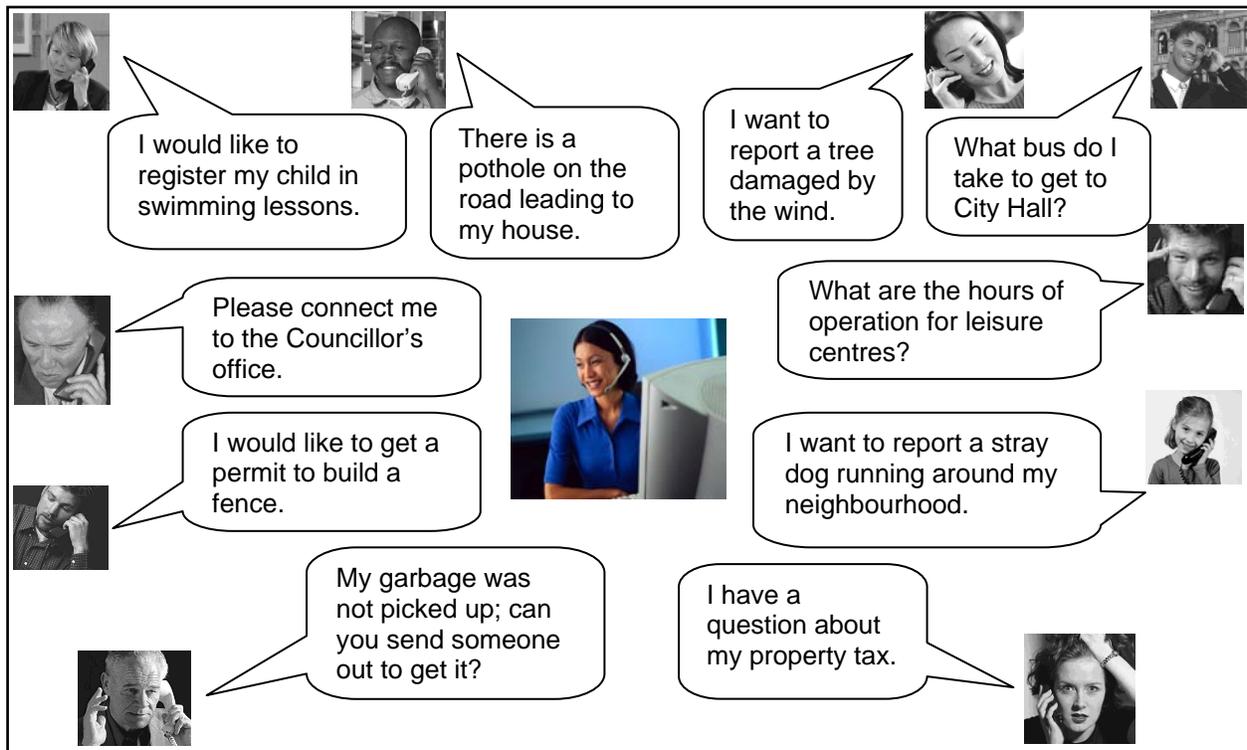
Table 1 illustrates the volume of telephone calls and emails handled by 311 in 2009 and the first quarter of 2010.

Table 1 – 311 Service Volume

Service Volume	2009				2010
	1 st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	3 rd Quarter	4 th Quarter	1 st Quarter
Total number of phone calls	391,791	455,670	413,585	330,228	359,837
Number of calls answered	290,158	313,438	352,676	315,690	347,941
<i>Percent answered within 25 seconds</i>	35%	29%	51%	85%	85%
Number of Emails	4,093	4,722	5,286	5,137	7,175

Illustration 1 reflects ten of the more frequent types of calls received by 311.

Illustration 1 – Frequent Call Types



In addition to calling 311, citizens may also obtain information and request services on-line. Most of these self-service options were in place before 311 was implemented. In November 2009, 311 On-line was introduced. It consolidated access to transactions and information that is available on various WebPages and provides an additional self-service option. Table 2 illustrates the volume of on-line activity for the City's website overall and examples of WebPages that are frequently used.

Table 2 – Website Activity

WebPage	2009				2010
	1 st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	3 rd Quarter	4 th Quarter	1 st Quarter
Overall City Website	1,443,245	1,546,404	1,636,385	1,471,883	1,576,619
Permits & Licenses	29,440	35,921	31,248	32,555	36,525
Transit Planning	220,835	214,956	241,529	223,159	232,572
SLIM (maps)	120,788	139,130	127,110	111,138	147,605
311 On-line	--	--	--	2,577	7,958

3. Audit Objectives, Scope, & Methodology

Our review of 311 covers two time periods. The first covers the period starting with the feasibility assessment in 2005 through to mid-2009. This facilitated the assessment of the process employed for approval and implementation of this corporate initiative. The second period covers the second half of 2009 through to the first quarter of 2010. This facilitated the assessment of current operations after additional agents were hired to improve service performance to target levels.

3.1. Evolution of the 311 Call Centre

Our first audit objective was to assess the accuracy and reliability of assumptions and performance targets included in the 2006 business case and the impact they had on service delivery and the achievement of objectives. To meet this objective we:

1. Reviewed the original business case and supporting documentation and determined the reasonableness of assumptions and performance targets.
2. Compared actual full time equivalent (FTE) or position transfers to those included in the business case and determined the impact on performance and projected savings.
3. Reviewed operational results for the first half of 2009 and determine if there are any additional reasons for not achieving performance and projected savings.

3.2. Current Operations

Our second objective was to assess current call centre operations and identify opportunities for improvement. To meet this objective we:

1. Compared operational and performance data to industry benchmark information. We also completed a maturity assessment using leading practice criteria.
2. Assessed the effectiveness of communication between departments and 311 for events that could impact call volumes and information provided to citizens by 311 Agents.
3. Reviewed a sample of the scripts and processes for referral services to:
 - i. Assess effectiveness of system interface and feedback process.
 - ii. Determine accountability and ability to track requests from initial call to closure.
4. Assessed the staff training and development model employed by 311.
5. Assessed the use and capabilities of the call management and reporting tools currently in use.

4. Observations and Analysis

4.1. Evolution of the 311 Call Centre

The City Administration hired a consultant company in 2005 to review the feasibility of consolidating call centre operations into a single call centre. The review was prompted by the ruling of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) allowing municipalities to use a 311 phone number for non-emergency services. The consultant delivered two major reports:

1. May 9, 2005 - A Feasibility Study that assessed the current delivery of non-emergency telephone services through multiple call centres and telephone lines.
2. December 20, 2005 - An Opportunity Evaluation that clarified and detailed the scope, scale and business model for 311.

The conclusion reached by the consultant addressed both the potential to realize cost savings and to increase citizen satisfaction through the consolidation of telephone service into a 311 environment. With regard to cost savings, the consultant concluded that consolidation of telephone services was not justifiable based on savings alone. Some savings were expected from the reduction in the number of telephone numbers managed and published in the Blue Pages. Other savings in the form of cost avoidance for growth demands and long-term savings from consolidation were also identified.

With regard to increased citizen satisfaction, the consultant concluded the consolidation of call centers would be highly aligned with corporate goals and would deliver significant benefits to both citizens and the Administration. Key benefits include: a single, easy to remember, number to dial with 24/7 access to the City, closer communications with the public, decreased call transfers to find the right department for the caller's issue, and increased ability for the City to deliver services more effectively.

On May 9, 2006 Council received a report from the Administration titled "*311 Citizen Telephone Access*". Council approved a \$10 million capital budget to establish the call centre with funding to come from an internal loan. Payback of the loan was to come from savings realized from operational efficiencies. The report identified the following benefits:

- The single 311 entry point means citizen inquiries can be made through one convenient, easy to remember phone number, 24-hours a day, seven days a week.
- Citizens can be confident their requests will be handled with a single phone call and will either have it immediately resolved, or will have a clear understanding of when and how it will be addressed.
- Calls will be tracked and customers will be provided with a service request number, which will enable them to track the progress of their query via the City's website or by making a follow-up call to 311.
- Better reporting and information to the Administration to make positive adjustments to the services delivered. 311 is a central repository for client services performance

measures. Operational entities will set performance standards for use in responding to service requests. Actual performance will be measured and monitored.

- Enhance Edmonton's image as a high-tech, call centre city.
- The City will realize operating efficiencies from consolidating call takers into 311. Net financial savings are estimated to be \$350,000 in 2009 and \$500,000 in 2010. From 2011 and on, the City will amass savings of approximately \$1 million per year.

Early challenges

Three service level objectives identified in 2006 were:

1. 311 would be able to answer 80% of calls within 25 seconds,
2. the abandoned call rate would be reduced from 8.5% to zero, and
3. the average call handle time would be reduced from 5.3 minutes to 3 minutes (180 seconds).

Table 3 summarizes the operating results for 2009 and the first quarter of 2010.

Table 3 – Operational Results

Measure	2009				2010
	1 st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	3 rd Quarter	4 th Quarter	1 st Quarter
Percent of Calls:					
Answered	75%	69%	85%	96%	97%
Abandoned (caller hung up)	19%	22%	14%	4%	3%
Deflected (busy signal)	6%	9%	1%	0%	0%
Service Levels:					
Calls Answered within 25 Seconds	35%	29%	51%	85%	85%
Average Speed To Answer (seconds)	117	158	88	15	12

The results in the first half of 2009 show that only a third of the calls were answered within 25 seconds and that the abandoned call rate increased to approximately 20%. Some of the factors that impacted the initial performance of 311 were the fewer number of positions transferred to 311 than anticipated, a higher percent of calls being fully resolved by 311 versus being transferred to operational areas¹, and an average call handle time in excess of 5 minutes.

On September 23, 2009 the Administration provided the Executive Committee with a 311 Service Update report advising that average wait times in the second half of 2009 dropped from 137 seconds to 56 seconds, with more than half of the calls being answered in 25 seconds or less. The improvement in performance in the second half of

¹ Specific information for the first half of 2009 was not readily available. However, 83% of calls were fully addressed by 311 Agents in 2009 compared to the 61% forecast in 2007.

2009 was a result of the Corporate Services Department adding 39 FTEs with the majority of the funding transferred from other branches within the department.

As part of the 2010 budget process, an additional 26 FTEs were added and a motion was passed that removed the 2006 requirement to repay the Capital Loan from operational efficiencies, directing it to be repaid from Corporate Operating Surplus funds as they become available.

As of June 30, 2010 there were 149 FTEs dedicated to providing 311 services.

Staff Transfers to 311

The number of staff or FTEs available to answer calls was the most critical factor impacting the initial performance of the 311 call centre.

Comments received from operating departments indicated that there was not a common understanding and agreement of the methodology to determine the number of FTEs dedicated to call centre activities.

The following highlights the evolution from the initial calculation in 2006 to the actual FTEs transferred to 311 in 2008:

- In 2006, Council was informed that 180 FTEs were receiving calls from Citizens. This number was the result of the consultant's assessment of information collected from operational areas. The consultant's report identified 180 FTEs performing call centre functions of which 155 were to be transferred to 311.

Departments faced challenges identifying FTEs where positions performed both call centre functions and other duties. Their concerns related to the data collection methodology and presentation. The estimate of 180 FTEs was used to prepare the business case.

- In late 2007, the implementation team re-evaluated the number of FTEs performing call centre functions. This resulted in the identification of 163 FTEs performing call centre functions of which 108 were to be transferred to 311.

The re-evaluation was based on current data provided by operational areas. The data included call volumes, the amount of time staff spent performing call centre functions, and the impact of the proposed process changes.

- In 2008, during consolidation, the number of FTE's to be transferred to 311 was negotiated with each operational area. In total, 84 FTEs were transferred from operational areas to 311.

The final step in the negotiation process was the sign-off of a 311 Project Budget Adjustment. General Managers interpreted the sign-off as signifying all staffing and budget obligations were met.

Operational areas continue to experience service delivery issues for non-call centre functions that were previously part of the duties of staff transferred to 311. Concerns

were also expressed about the increased work associated with informing 311 of changes to scripts and signing-off script changes.

In our opinion, the determination of overall staffing requirements and FTE transfers required all stakeholders to have a common understanding and agreement on the methodology and use of results throughout the process.

Determination of overall staffing requirements and FTE transfers should have included:

- Identification and confirmation of the number of staff performing all call centre related functions, including new functions such as the creation/updating of call scripts.
- Acknowledgement that although a staff member performed call centre functions as part of their responsibilities, an FTE equivalent may not be transferable to 311. i.e. only 1 person at the front desk.
- Plans and timelines for operating areas to re-engineer their regular operational activities to adjust for changes required from the 311 implementation.

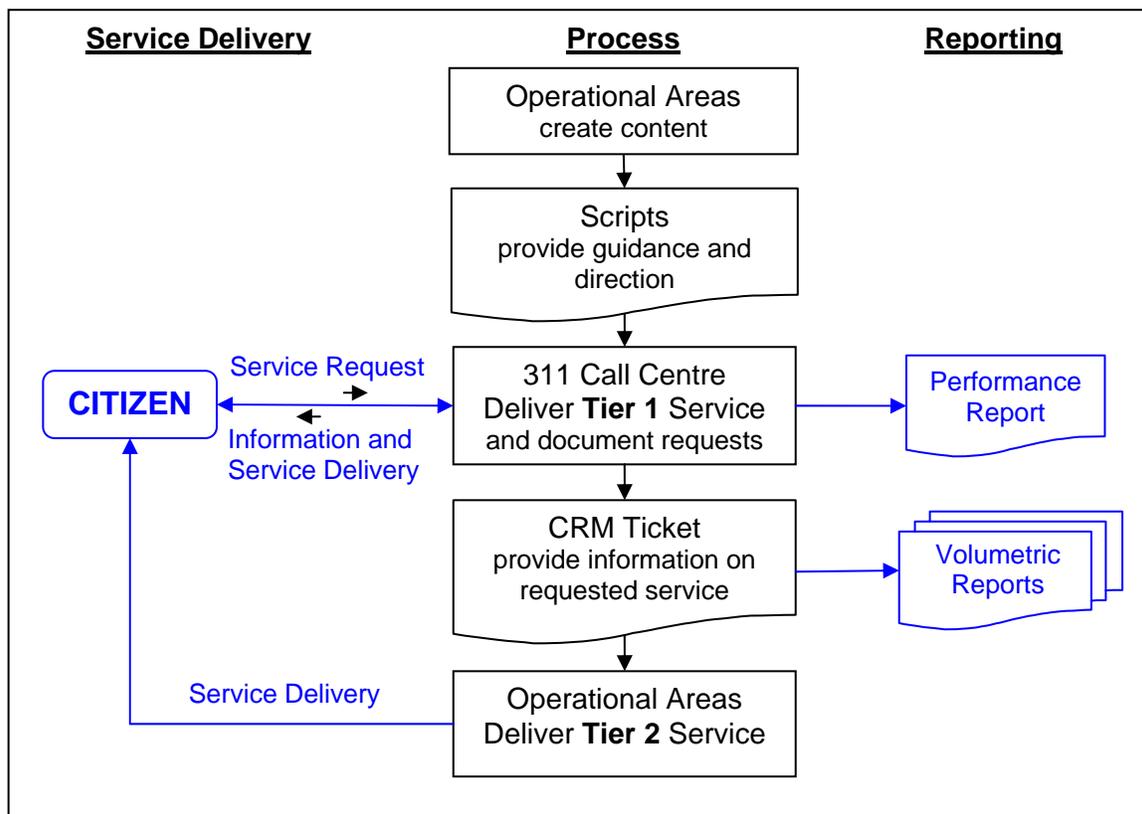
Corporate initiatives such as 311 provide opportunities to enhance citizen services while realizing benefits not achievable through productivity improvements made solely in individual operational areas. These initiatives can have a significant impact on operational areas requiring changes to processes and transfer of some control to a corporate office such as 311. In order to achieve the maximum benefit from corporate initiatives, decisions must be based on accurate and complete analysis of financial and staffing data and there needs to be clear communication and common understanding among stakeholders.

The following section describes our assessment of 311 current service delivery, including services provided by the operating areas that originate from a 311 service request.

4.2. Current Operations

The service delivery is based on a two tier business model. Illustration 2 depicts the current service delivery, process, and reporting model employed by the City.

Illustration 2 – Business Model



Responding to some citizen requests is a shared responsibility between the 311 Call Centre and an operational area. The role of 311 is to respond to queries in as complete a manner as possible. 311 Call Center Agents (Agents) are generalists², the information or service they deliver to citizens is based on pre-established scripts³ that are written and approved by the operational areas responsible for the delivery of service. Where possible, Agents fully address the citizen's request (tier 1). In some cases, specific information is not available to Agents or the call requires specialist⁴ skills (tier 2). In either case, Agents document the request call on a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) ticket⁵.

² Generalist – A person who has knowledge, aptitude, or skill in a variety of areas.

³ Script – A document that provides guidance on how to respond to specific requests. This includes the information to be dispensed and the process to follow for more complex requests that require action by the operational area.

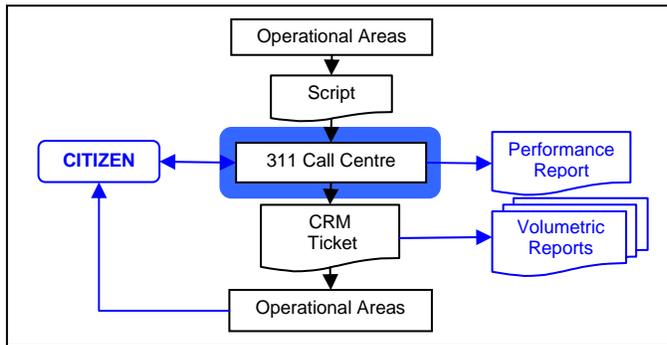
⁴ Specialist – One who is devoted to a particular occupation or branch of study.

⁵ CRM Ticket – Documentation of the reason for the call. CRM tickets are used to convey information to operational areas when further action is required and to facilitate reporting on call volumes.

Calls requiring action by operational areas may be immediately transferred to a specialist or the Agent may provide general information before transferring the call to a specialist. In other cases the Agent creates a CRM ticket that is sent electronically to the operational area for action. The manner in which these calls are handled is established by the operational areas.

The results of our review of current operations have been summarized in six categories: staffing and training, operational performance, roles and responsibilities, knowledge management, service request tracking, and performance reporting.

4.2.1. 311 Staffing and Training



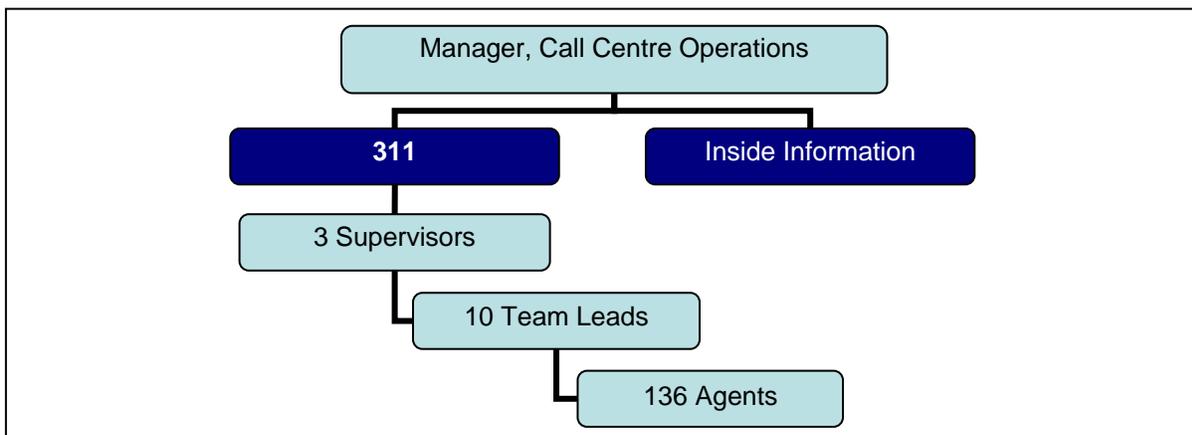
This section describes our review of the staffing and training models implemented within 311 and the impact they have on service delivery.

Staffing

The staffing model selected provides Agents with work variety, and 311 management with flexibility in scheduling.

The staffing model has one classification for all Agents. In addition to fielding calls from citizens, Agents have the opportunity to perform rotational duties in the areas of knowledge network management, resource scheduling, service level/floor support and working the escalation desk⁶. The rotational duties are available to staff once they have demonstrated they understand the corporate structure and services, and have the ability to take on the responsibilities associated with the rotational work. Chart 2 illustrates the staffing model implemented for Call Centre Operations.

Chart 2 – Call Centre Operations



⁶ The escalation desk is staffed by more experienced agents who provide support or receive transferred calls of a more complex or sensitive nature for further investigation and resolution.

A total of 149 staff are dedicated to 311 operations. There are two management and one support staff outside of 311 that also oversee all customer information and call centre operations.

The City employs both full-time and part-time Agents to increase the flexibility in scheduling of resources to provide appropriate coverage for peak periods. Table 4 compares Edmonton's staffing level to the average of other municipal call centres that chose to participate in the BenchmarkPortal⁷ RealityCheck survey.

Table 4 – 311 Agents

Number of Agents	Edmonton 311	Survey Average
Full-time Agents	101	29
Part-time Agents	35	4
Ratio of Full-time to Part-time Agents	2.9/1	7.2/1

Based on the number of Agents, Edmonton is one of the larger call centers that chose to participate in the benchmark survey. Edmonton has 1 part-time agent for every 3 full-time agents, providing greater scheduling flexibility and more efficient use of resources.

Training

Overall, the training delivered to Agents provides a solid foundation for service delivery. The formal training program implemented by 311 combines classroom training and fielding specific types of calls. New Agents start fielding specific types of calls (i.e., transit information) two weeks after being hired. It takes up to a year to complete the training before being assigned to the full 311 environment. Currently, classroom training is delivered by Team Leads who are familiar with the municipal service being covered. A training officer position had been created and 311 management were in the process of interviewing candidates at the time of our review. The training officer will be responsible for planning and implementing training curriculums that meet the needs of operational areas.

Representatives from some operational areas believe Agents are not adequately trained, noting errors in information recorded on CRM tickets and the short time period for training compared to the specialist training previously offered before 311 implementation. We noted that training materials were developed by operational areas when 311 was implemented.

Currently there is limited soft skill training. The City offers communication and interpersonal skill courses that are available to all City employees. Courses specific to

⁷ BenchmarkPortal is a company specializing in Call Center Consulting, Call Center Training, and Call Center Benchmarking. Since its beginnings in 1995 at Purdue University, BenchmarkPortal has grown with the call center industry and now hosts the world's largest call center metrics database. BenchmarkPortal's activities include The College of Call Center Excellence, a leader in call center training and certification.

the call centre industry have not been developed. We noted the qualifications for call centre staff includes at least 2 years of call centre experience. 311 management indicated that they assume applicants have been exposed to basic soft skill training before being hired.

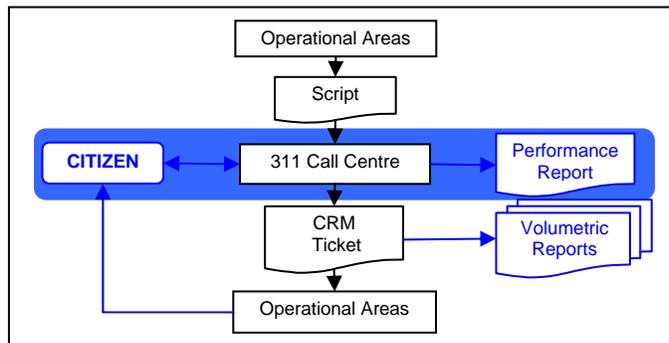
Feedback from Agents we interviewed indicates a high level of satisfaction with both the training offered and the call centre environment as a whole.

Based on our observation of 311 operations, review of the training programs, and interviews with Agents; we believe the staffing model and training program are providing good value. However, we believe the training materials should be reviewed and updated by operational areas on a regular basis to ensure they reflect the current operational needs of the City.

We are recommending that formal guidelines be developed that set out roles of both 311 and operational areas to ensure training materials are kept current.

Recommendation 2

4.2.2. Operational Performance



This section sets out the results of our assessment of the quality and efficiency of service delivered by 311 to the citizens of Edmonton.

Through our review we conclude that Edmonton 311 offers a high quality of service that is generally delivered in an efficient manner. This observation is based primarily on the comparison of

key performance indicators with those of other municipal call centres.

We utilized the services of BenchmarkPortal, which specializes in call centre benchmarking to complete the comparison. The results are summarized in:

- Table 5 which measures the effectiveness of service delivery, and
- Table 6 which measures the efficiency of the delivery of the chosen level of service.

Table 5 – Effectiveness Measures

Measure	Edmonton 311 ⁸	Survey Average ⁹
Average speed to answer calls	18 Seconds	43.6 Seconds
Calls Transferred	7.6%	15.9%
Abandoned Calls	4.7%	8.5%

These measures show that Edmonton's 311 service is providing a higher level of service than that provided by the municipal call centres that have chosen to participate in the BenchmarkPortal survey.

- Edmonton 311 answers calls in less than half the time of the survey average.
- Agents are able to fully respond to citizen requests more often requiring fewer transfers,
- Citizens are not hanging up or abandoning calls as often.

We were unable to compare two measures on the BenchmarkPortal survey.

1. Average Hold Time (Industry Average 18 seconds) – The City's automated call distribution (ACD) technology does not capture the length of time a citizen is placed on hold while an agent conducts research or tries to obtain information to respond to the request. 311 management advised us that they are currently evaluating new ACD technology that will capture the average hold time.
2. Customer Satisfaction – Edmonton does not have a formal process to solicit customer feedback on its 311 service. We noted that only 36% of municipal call centres included in the BenchmarkPortal database measure customer satisfaction.

Table 6 – Efficiency Measures

Measure	Edmonton 311 ⁸	Survey Average ⁹
Calls per agent per hour	9.0	8.3
Agent occupancy (productive time)	85.0%	73.7%
Percent of Calls handled by IVR ¹⁰ / Agents	0% / 100%	31.9% / 68.1%
Average talk time	3.1 minutes	2.7 minutes
Average after call work time	1.9 minutes	1.0 minute
Agent turn-over rate (annual)	17.0%	11.5%

⁸ Edmonton 311 performance indicators are based on operations for the period September 2009 through March 2010 to reflect the results for the current staffing level.

⁹ This is the average for all municipal call centres that have chosen to participate in the BenchmarkPortal RealityCheck survey.

¹⁰ IVR – Interactive Voice Response is a technology that automates interactions with telephone callers.

The first two measures indicate that Edmonton's 311 service is more efficient than the industry average:

- On average, Edmonton's agents handle more calls per hour than other call centre agents.
- Agents are more productive than their counterparts in other call centres.

The next three measures reflect the model and principles established prior to implementation of 311. There may be opportunities to reduce the overall cost of service if direction is provided to change the model and principles:

- Edmonton has chosen not to use interactive voice recognition (IVR) technology. This leads to increased agent intervention.
- Edmonton's agents spend slightly more time talking to citizens than the industry average. The longer talk time is a result of two principles. First, the City does not limit the length of time citizens require of agents. Second, where possible first call resolution will occur, reducing the need for call backs and call transfers.
- Agents are spending nearly twice as much time documenting calls compared to the industry average. Factors impacting this measure include the lack of integration of systems which increases the manual processes and Edmonton's 311 is still in its early years of operation.

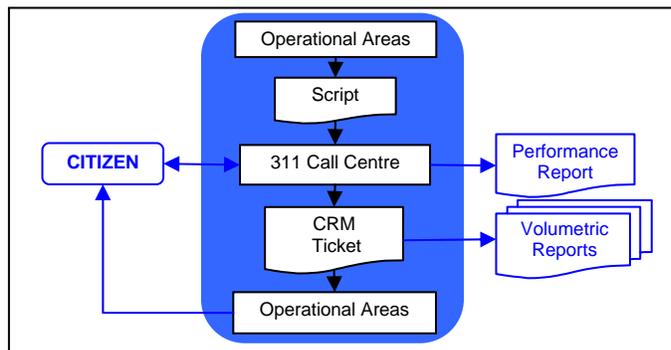
The final measure shows Edmonton agent turnover is approximately 50% higher than other municipal call centres. For the year ending March 31, 2010 twenty-three Agents left 311; 11 staff left the City's employ and 12 staff transferred to other positions within the City.

The benchmark comparison indicates that citizens are receiving a high quality service and that the service is being delivered in an efficient manner. The ability to improve the efficiency of operations would require clear direction on changes to service levels and use of technology to automate processes.

We have recommended that 311 implement a process to collect customer feedback to assist in evaluating service expectations and perception with a view to improving overall service delivery and 311 Agent performance.

Recommendation 1

4.2.3. Roles and Responsibilities



The results of our assessment of roles and responsibilities for both 311 and those of operational areas delivering services are set out in this section.

We assessed 311 services using a maturity model designed to determine the current state of the call centre infrastructure and operations. This assessment was undertaken to help

bring about clarity on where the infrastructure is in terms of definition and understanding of roles, responsibilities, and service levels; operational practices; and strategic execution. The results of this assessment show that there is need for an increased corporate perspective on the delivery of services.

The assessment covered five major building blocks essential for the delivery of service.

1. **Foundation** – The foundation includes elements that establish the means to achieve specific and defined goals. Elements include the mission/vision, structure, and products and services.
2. **People** – People can turn a call centre from ordinary to world class. The elements to motivate people include position descriptions that clearly define roles and expectations, and staffing levels and training that support a healthy work environment.
3. **Process** – Process is about communications and cooperation between all parts of the organization. Process elements include the call handling process, call management/escalation, and call transfer to operational areas.
4. **Tools** – Tools represent a significant investment. Elements include technologies to automate process and facilitate performance metrics, and knowledge management to empower agents to respond to difficult queries.
5. **Customers** – The customer building block includes both establishing expectations and providing the best communication possible. Elements include communicating services to citizens and measuring customer satisfaction.

We assessed the five building blocks against 104 criteria¹¹. The results are classified in the following categories.

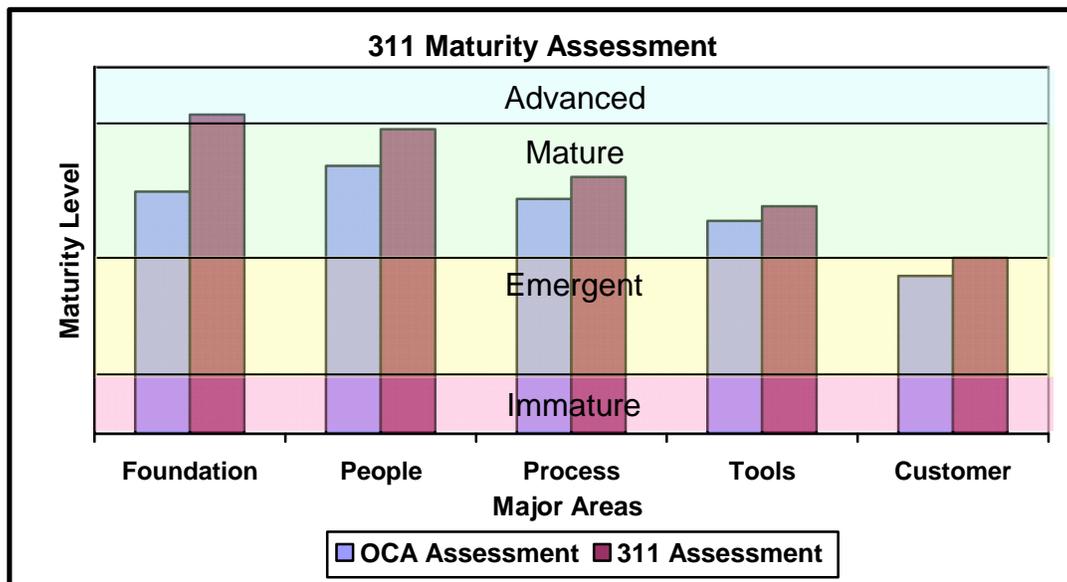
- **Immature** – Lacks the basic implementation. Major enhancements required to move to best practice environment.

¹¹ Criteria are based on the audit model set out in “The Help Desk Audit” by Julie Mohr. The criteria were discussed and agreed to by 311 management prior to completion of the assessment.

- Emergent – Has implemented a mix of critical and essential elements. Requires some modification or enhancement to move to a best practice environment.
- Mature – Has implemented most critical elements. Some enhancement is required to move to best practice environment.
- Advanced – Little or no improvement required. Working in best practice environment.

To ensure that our assessment results fairly reflect the current state, 311 management completed their own assessment. The results of both assessments are reflected on Chart 3.

Chart 3 – Maturity Assessment



Overall the OCA and 311 Management are in agreement of the level of maturity of 311 operations. The results of these assessments show:

- The biggest difference of opinion is with the Foundation building block. We considered the criteria from a corporate perspective while 311 Management considered the criteria from the Customer Information Services Branch perspective. We agree with 311 Management that within the 311 organization, the operation is well defined. However, from a corporate perspective we believe there are opportunities to improve operations and achieve greater benefits.
- Both the OCA and 311 Management assessed the People, Process and Tools building blocks as mature. These areas need to be in place to deliver high quality services in an efficient manner.
- Both the OCA and 311 Management rated the Customer building block as emerging, not yet mature. The absence of a formal customer feedback process is a missing critical element.

We noted that general principles to identify the services that should be consolidated into 311 were developed for the implementation project. However, there are no guidelines to assess services on a regular basis or when circumstances change. In one case, an operational area not in the original scope for consolidation of call service was subsequently added to 311, and in the first year of operation, removed. The operational area has resumed taking calls directly from the public.

Further, the City does not have a guideline to assess the need for publishing phone numbers. We scanned the blue pages for the past three years and noticed a substantial decrease in the number of published telephone numbers. We also scanned the City’s 311 on-line webpage, and noticed some areas continue to publish their own contact information, which bypasses 311.

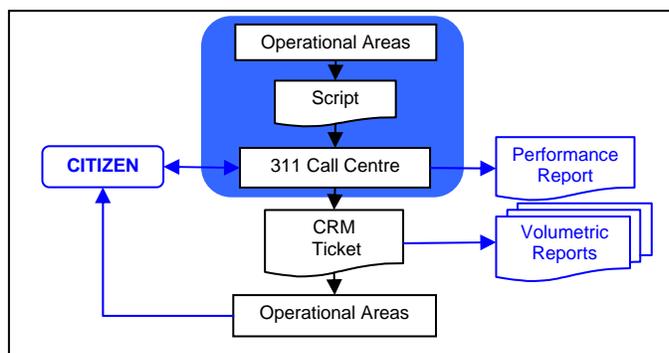
There are valid reasons for providing citizens with direct phone numbers such as for specialized services where 311 would function as a telephone operator only, or if there is a requirement for ongoing contact between a citizen and the operational area. However, the lack of corporate guidelines can result in publishing telephone numbers unnecessarily, resulting in the loss of the benefits of a 311 service.

The lack of corporate guidance can result in duplication of services and ineffective use of resources.

We are recommending that corporate guidelines be developed that clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of both 311 and operational areas. This should include setting service delivery criteria to assess which services should be handled by 311.

Recommendation 2

4.2.4. Knowledge Management



This section describes the results of our assessment of the process used to maintain the scripts that provide guidance and direction to agents when responding to citizen queries and service requests.

There is no evidence indicating there is a problem with scripts residing in the knowledge warehouse. However, we

cannot provide assurance that scripts are current and complete as there are no documented requirements or procedures for knowledge management.

Currently there are more than 6000 scripts in the knowledge warehouse. The guidance provided in the scripts ensures queries are answered in a consistent and accurate manner. Responsibility for managing the warehouse resides with 311. Responsibility for ensuring scripts are current and accurate reside with operational areas.

A process for managing the scripts once 311 has been notified of required changes is in place, however, procedures have not been documented. Further, procedures to ensure scripts are current and accurate have not been formalized. 311 management assumes operational areas are reviewing scripts and providing them with updated information as operational changes take place. There is no documentation on file indicating that all scripts in the knowledge warehouse have been approved by operational areas. Representatives of the operational areas we interviewed were also unsure whether scripts had been signed off.

311 management identified 303 scripts updated in the fourth quarter of 2009 and 240 updated the first quarter of 2010. Prorated over a year this suggests less than 20% of scripts are updated annually.

While observing 311 operations we noticed that Agents do not always access scripts when responding to queries. Agents we interviewed indicated they respond to common queries from memory and that they find some scripts hard to understand. We observed a small number of queries that were either responded to incorrectly, or information captured was incomplete requiring operational areas to gather additional information prior to responding to the citizen.

Associated with each script is a CRM code that identifies the purpose of the call and facilitates distribution of requests to operational areas and reporting. The operational area representatives we interviewed noted CRM coding errors result in CRM tickets being sent to the wrong operational area, delaying response to citizens.

We reviewed the complete list of CRM codes noting many are associated with more than one script. We were advised that there are no standards or guidelines on how codes are to be set up or the need for periodic review. Operational areas make up their own coding methodology that is aligned with their business practices. For example, one operational area uses just one code for all queries while another has codes for each type of query, and each employee responsible for handling the query. During our review we identified 2,460 active CRM codes. We noted that 597 (24%) of the codes have never been used.

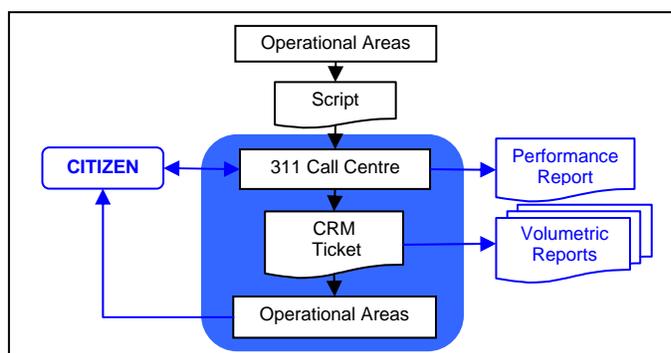
The lack of a formal process to ensure scripts are current, the absence of CRM code guidelines, and the high percentage of unused CRM codes indicates the knowledge warehouse contains a significant amount of information that may be out of date or is no longer required. The absence of a common coding structure also require users of corporate reports to exercise caution in interpreting reported results due to the inconsistent manner in which data is collected and summarized. We reviewed 16 scripts and confirmed that 15 were current and only 1 was out of date.

Scripts need to be reviewed and signed-off on a regular basis to ensure citizens are being provided current information and requests are being handled in an efficient manner. CRM codes should also be reviewed to ensure they are required and they meet both department and corporate reporting needs.

We are recommending that guidelines be established that set out the roles of both 311 and operational areas to ensure scripts are kept current. 311 management should also consider establishing a process that provides direction to agents on which scripts need to be followed precisely and which provide guidance only.

Recommendation 2

4.2.5. Service Request Tracking



This section sets out our observations on the City's ability to consistently track citizen requests and monitor overall performance.

We found weaknesses in both 311 and operational areas that limit the ability to effectively monitor and report on service delivery.

In 2009, 1.2 million CRM tickets were created in response to citizens' calls. These tickets were created and managed using the SAP CRM module. CRM tickets serve three functions.

1. They capture information to facilitate reporting of trends, topics and data that measure the success or failure of Civic programs and services.
2. They are the primary communication tool with operational areas; conveying information critical to enable a timely response to the appropriate operational area.
3. They enable tracking of the status and facilitate responding to a citizen following-up on a previous request.

We compared the number of CRM tickets recorded in the CRM database with the number of answered calls recorded by the ACD system. There were 42,995 more calls answered than there were tickets created. Reconciliation of the two systems has not taken place and a process to ensure reasonableness of any discrepancy has not been developed.

Our review of the CRM database shows that 83% of the citizen requests received in 2009 were fully addressed by Agents. The remaining 17%, or 212,924 tickets, were transferred to specialists in operational areas for response or action to address the citizen's request. We were advised that responsibility to monitor performance from a corporate perspective has not been assigned.

The following observations relate to the completion of CRM tickets:

- The two systems that capture performance and volumetric data are independent of each other. The only interface is the manual data entry by Agents through the CRM system.
- The CRM technology has not been configured to have any mandatory fields, with the exception of the CRM code. This can impact the completeness of the information captured and the length of time required to complete a service request.
- Agents do not always access and follow scripts for commonly received requests.
- The system does not automatically notify operational areas of changes to notification tickets after the initial save/transfer. If an Agent inadvertently saves a ticket too early, for example without verifying an address, the Agent needs to phone the affected operational area(s) and advise them to access the CRM system and obtain the updated information.
- A consistent process to forward CRM tickets when they are incorrectly coded has not been defined. Operational areas are using different processes to handle tickets when they believe they have been incorrectly coded resulting in delay in responding to citizen requests.
- The business rule for recording multiple reports for the same incident (e.g., a number of citizens call in to report the same pothole at a major intersection) requires individual CRM tickets to be created. Further, the systems used by 311 do not have the capability to identify and consolidate multiple reports. Operational areas are responsible for identifying and consolidating duplicate tickets prior to deploying resources.

The status on 52,431 CRM tickets (24%) transferred to operational areas in 2009 were flagged as open at the time of our review. We selected a sample from these tickets and reviewed processes associated with managing ticket resolution and closure. We observed the following conditions which could prevent the City from achieving the desired benefits of a corporate call centre.

1. Various technologies are used to transfer CRM tickets from 311 to operational areas. Each operational area chose technology that is aligned with their operational process, in most cases the technologies were in place prior to the implementation of 311. Ticket distribution methods include: transfer between SAP modules, pass-off to other systems, and use of Outlook e-mail. Processes to update the status of CRM tickets are in place for all distribution methods with the exception of tickets transferred using e-mail.

Interviews of representatives in operational areas revealed differences of opinion on when CRM tickets are to be closed. Most of those interviewed understood tickets were to be closed after the citizen's request was fully addressed, consistent with the intent of the process. However, others believe tickets should be considered closed when transferred from 311. This interpretation compromises the ability to monitor performance from a corporate perspective and the ability to respond to citizens following up on previous requests.

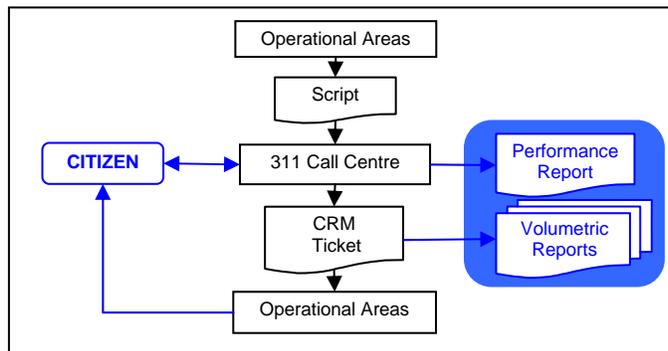
2. Each operational area has developed its own approach to handle CRM tickets. The approach selected is aligned with the business model and operational practices specific to the delivery of service. These approaches include: tickets being accessed directly by a specialist responsible for responding to citizen requests, supervisors access tickets and distributing them to the appropriate staff, and tickets being accessed by a dispatch service and being distributed to work crews. Corporately, roles and responsibilities have not been clearly defined and service agreements between 311 and operational areas have not been established. In the absence of clear corporate direction and service agreements, there is a risk that operational areas will take on a call answering role duplicating the service provided by 311 and loss of the ability to accurately report on call activity.

Inconsistent practices limit the ability to effectively monitor the status of individual requests and overall delivery of services.

We are recommending that corporate guidelines be established that provide operational areas with definitions and procedures that promote a consistent and efficient means of monitoring and reporting on the status of all citizen requests.

Recommendation 2

4.2.6. Performance Reporting



This section summarizes our observations on the current reporting practices relative to 311 services and the consistency of information reported to stakeholders.

We found that performance reporting requirements within 311 are being met. From a corporate perspective we found reporting requirements have not

been defined and information reported varied depending on the system used to generate reports.

We reviewed reports produced from two systems; 1) the automated call distribution (ACD) system that captures information on calls made to 311, and 2) the business intelligence (BI) module of SAP that uses data recorded on CRM tickets.

The report produced from ACD information is created by 311 staff by manually transferring data to an Excel spreadsheet. The report is used by 311 management to monitor call activity and performance. We noted some minor errors on the report when we compared the results to source data. The errors resulted from the manual transfer of information.

The report produced from the BI module of SAP is created by staff from the Deputy City Manager's Office (DCMO). In addition to the reports produced by the DCMO, departments have access to SAP online reporting.

As noted in the previous section, we compared the information contained in the ACD reports and with that reported by the DCMO and noted differences in the total number of inquiries/requests. Reconciliation of the two systems has not taken place and a process to ensure reasonableness of any discrepancy has not been developed. We were advised differences may be due to some citizen calls not being recorded in CRM if they are very simple and/or citizen calls may include more than one request.

We also noted that the total inquiries quoted in the DCMO June 2009 report did not match the June total reported in the 2009 year end report. Upon further review we discovered information obtained through the BI module did not match that recorded in CRM. The Administration was unable to provide an explanation for the differences between the modules or period reports.

Based on our discussion with 311 Management and DCMO staff we noted responsibility for reporting has not been assigned and overall corporate reporting needs have not been defined.

The current reporting process can result in different responses to the same question, and inefficient reporting practices.

We are recommending that reporting guidelines be developed. This includes defining reporting requirements, assigning responsibility for the reporting function, and identifying the most effective means of satisfying reporting requirements. This will reduce the risk of errors in reported results and distribution of inaccurate information.

Recommendation 2

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The number of staff or FTEs available to answer calls was the most critical factor impacting the initial performance of the 311 call centre.

There were significant differences between the FTEs identified prior to approval and the actual FTE allocation during implementation. This impacted the performance of both 311 and operational areas and their inability to deliver the target level of service communicated when the project was approved. Operational areas continue to have unresolved concerns.

Delivery of 311 service is a shared responsibility. Operational areas provide 311 with information and procedures that meet their individual needs. Agents respond to citizen queries as completely as possible. When the citizen request requires information not

available to 311 or specialist service is required, the request is forwarded to the appropriate operational area for resolution.

We assessed current operations from six perspectives: staffing and training, operational performance, roles and responsibilities, knowledge management, service request tracking, and performance reporting.

Overall, we concluded that 311 is delivering a high level of service and that it is being provided in an efficient manner. Clear direction on service level reductions or a capital investment in state-of-the-art call centre technology would be required to achieve any significant cost reductions.

The City does not have a formal means of collecting customer feedback on 311 services. While this is common among most municipal call centres included in the benchmark results, we believe a formal process should be put in place that could be used to assess citizen expectations and perceptions and to focus future service improvements. Depending on the process selected, citizen feedback could also be used to assess individual 311 Agent performance. The following recommendation is being made to ensure the City has a better understanding of citizen expectations and perceptions relative to 311 services.

Recommendation 1

Section 4.2.2

The OCA recommends that the Director of Customer Information Services implement a process to periodically collect customer satisfaction information.

Management Response and Action Plan

Accepted

Action Plan: Customer Information Services will explore solutions available to collect feedback from users of 311. A solution on how we will measure user satisfaction for the critical elements of the 311 service will be developed. After the measurement criteria is finalized, we will seek out vendors to outline the design and implementation of this survey for rollout by mid 2011.

Planned Implementation Date: Measurement tool by December 31, 2010, results by Fall, 2011.

Responsible Party: Director, Customer Information Services

Throughout our review we observed differing opinions on roles, responsibilities, definitions and process. Corporate guidelines are not in place, leaving interpretation up to the individual. The differing opinions can impact the quality of service citizens receive and the ability to monitor and report on activity. Specific areas of concern include: the maintenance of training materials and scripts that guide the dissemination of information to citizens; inconsistent practices related to the management of citizen requests limiting the ability to report on the status of requests; and undefined corporate reporting requirements and inconsistencies in reporting.

In order for the City to achieve maximum benefit from 311 operations, guidelines on services, and roles and responsibilities need to be developed. The following recommendation is being made to ensure there is a common understanding of processes and responsibility to help focus efforts on satisfying citizen needs rather than challenging process and transferring requests between operational areas.

Recommendation 2

Sections 4.2.1, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, 4.2.5, 4.2.6

The OCA recommends the Director of Customer Information Service develop corporate guidelines, for Corporate Leadership Team approval, that set out roles, responsibilities, and service expectations for processes that require action by operational areas. As a minimum, guidelines should cover:

- Maintenance of training materials and scripts,
- Criteria to evaluate service that should be provided by 311,
- Tracking of service delivery, and
- Performance reporting.

Management Response and Action Plan

- Maintenance of training materials and scripts

Accepted

Action Plan: Customer Information Services, in consultation with City Departments, will develop formal guidelines outlining the roles and responsibilities for maintenance including a periodic review and signoff process to ensure training materials and script procedures remain accurate and up to date.

Planned Implementation Date: October 31, 2010

Responsible Party: Director, Customer Information Services

- Criteria to evaluate service that should be provided by 311

Accepted

Action Plan: Customer Information Services, in consultation with City Departments, will formalize criteria for identifying services that are or should be part of the 311 service model. We will also outline guidelines for publishing contact numbers in communication vehicles like the web, brochures, advertising and phone directories.

Planned Implementation Date: October 31, 2010

Responsible Party: Director, Customer Information Services

- Tracking of service delivery

Accepted

Action Plan: Reporting on transactions completed by 311 agents (83% of call activity) is fully in place and reporting of volumes and transaction types are available for all departments to access in CRM reporting. For the remaining 17% of the transactions, the

Management Response and Action Plan

request results in a handoff for completion by a city department representative.

Customer Information Services and City Departments will work together to document current processes for all of the service transactions that are transferred from 311. As part of this process we will develop common definitions and business rules for tracking ticket status to enable efficient means of reporting on the status of citizen requests.

Planned Implementation Date: June 30, 2011

Responsible Party: 311 Governance Committee; Director, Customer Information Services

- Performance reporting

Accepted

Action Plan: Customer Information Services, in consultation with the Strategic Management Branch DCMO, will initiate a review of 311 transaction data reporting. Working with City Departments and other stakeholders we will define reporting requirements, roles and responsibilities, and processes for 311 related performance reporting.

Planned Implementation Date: March 31, 2011

Responsible Party: Director, Customer Information Services; Manager, Strategic Management DCMO

We acknowledge and thank Customer Information Services management, 311 staff and DCMO staff for their efforts and openness during this audit. We also want to acknowledge the input provided by management and staff from various departments.