



2021-2023

Customer Service Action Plan



The State Laboratory
An tSaotharlann Stáit

Customer Service Action Plan

The State Laboratory is a scheduled office under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and provides a comprehensive analytical and advisory service to Government Departments and Offices, thereby enabling them to implement their regulatory programmes and attain their strategic objectives.

Our Customer Charter specifically relates to how we interact with you, and our conduct during those interactions. This accompanying Action Plan lays out our commitments under each heading and how we will evaluate and consult on the achievement of those commitments.

Our Mission:

To provide a world-class analytical chemistry and advisory service to the State, supporting government, protecting consumers, preventing fraud and safeguarding public health.

Our Values:

The State Laboratory will foster and promote:

- A quality and responsive customer service
- A culture of innovation and continuous improvement
- A collaborative work environment where people are treated with dignity and respect
- The highest standards of professionalism and scientific excellence
- A public service ethos of independence, integrity and impartiality
- A culture of accountability, efficiency and value for money

Structure of the Laboratory

The Laboratory is currently organised into nine functional Sections, which broadly reflect the breadth of our statutory remit. The Sections are:

- * Animal Feedingstuffs
- * Contaminants
- * Customs and Excise
- * Health
- * Human Toxicology
- * Veterinary Toxicology
- * Corporate Services
- * ICT Unit
- * Quality Assurance Unit

Given the nature of the Laboratory's responsibilities, functions and roles, the Sections do not primarily provide services to members of the public. Rather, they provide services directly to internal stakeholders and other Government Departments and Offices.

Our Commitment to our Customers and Clients

The Laboratory is committed to providing a professional, efficient and courteous service to all of its customers. This Customer Service Action Plan provides further details of how the commitments and standards outlined in our Customer Charter will be delivered by the Laboratory in accordance with the guiding Principles of Quality Customer Service (QCS) which have been adopted across the public service.

Customer Service Action Plan

Service Standards

We aim to:- provide a world-class analytical chemistry and advisory service to the State, supporting government, protecting consumers, preventing fraud and safeguarding public health.

| COMMITMENT | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR |
|---|---|
| 1. Provide a high quality analytical and advisory service for customers in an efficient and effective manner appropriate to the customers' needs. | Customer feedback |
| 2. Agree with customers and document in Service Level Agreements the standard of service to be provided. | Service Level Agreements in place |
| 3. Meet the commitments given in Service Level Agreements, including specific targets for sample turn-around times. | Annual Report published |
| 4. Hold regular meetings with customers to review the quality of the service provided and to identify future legislative trends and their impact on customer requirements. | Client meetings held at least annually |
| 5. Operate in accordance with a documented quality system based on the ISO/IEC 17025 international standard for competence of testing laboratories and hold accreditation from the Irish National Accreditation Board (Reg. No. 146T) for specific areas of work as agreed in the Service Level Agreements. | INAB scope of accreditation maintained and scope of testing extended |
| 6. Provide competent and impartial expert witness testimony in courts of law on issues relating to its analytical and advisory services. | Witness statements and expert witness testimony provided |
| 7. Continuously adapt the analytical service provided to take advantage of technological progress and ensure that customers' current and future scientific needs are met. | New methods of analysis introduced and Innovation Strategy implemented. |
| 8. Actively contribute to the development of relevant international standards and regulations governing chemical analysis. | Technical advice provided to Customers, Competent Bodies and EU laboratory networks |

Customer Service Action Plan

Equality/ Diversity

We aim to: comply with all equality legislation including the Employment Equality Act, 1998, the Equal Status Act, 2000 and the Equality Act, 2004.

| COMMITMENT | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR |
|--|--|
| 9. Ensure that all customers are treated equally in line with legislation. | Customer feedback |
| 10. Promote staff awareness of equality and diversity issues | Training provided and awareness campaigns held |

Official Languages Equality

We aim to : make every effort to our commitments under the Official Languages Act 2003 and we will publish major publications such as the Annual Report and Strategy Statement in Irish and English

Physical Access

We aim to: monitor all laboratory and office spaces to ensure they comply with occupational health and safety standards and ensure that there are suitable facilities in place for clients, including those with special needs, when they are interacting with staff from the Laboratory.

| COMMITMENT | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR |
|--|---|
| 11. Monitor and maintain the safety of our laboratory and office spaces. All staff participate in emergency and evacuation drills. | Facilities Management company in place. Safety Statement is in place and implemented. Health and Safety checks carried out routinely including Risk Assessment and training. Fire drills held regularly. Fire equipment tested |
| 12. Provide assistance, if required, to persons with disabilities who wish to access our services. | Help and information is available and provided to people with disabilities and specific needs who wish to use our premises or services. |

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Information

We aim to: ensure that all our publications are clear, accurate and available in electronic or printed format and meet the requirements of people with specific needs. When answering queries, we will give accurate information in a timely fashion, using clear and simple language. We have a website www.statelab.ie which we keep as up to date as possible.

| COMMITMENT | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR |
|---|-----------------------|
| 13. Provide as much useful information as possible through our website. In doing so, we will use plain English written communications, keeping the use of technical or official terms and jargon to a minimum and where necessary explaining these terms. | Customer feedback |
| 14. Respond to customer queries in a timely manner. | Customer feedback |
| 15. Process all customer information in accordance with the Data Protection legislation. | Zero data breaches |

Timeliness and Courtesy

We aim to: treat all clients with courtesy and respect when you call, write to or visit us and we are committed to delivering quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay.

| COMMITMENT | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR |
|---|---|
| <p>16. Ensure that the following practical measures are consistently in place to support timeliness and courtesy, such that all staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ provide their contact details in any correspondence to allow for easy follow up; ◆ provide a prompt response to correspondence. When this is not feasible due to the need for significant investigation, research or resources we will provide a prompt update which will outline the expected time frame for the response; ◆ ensure that when staff are out of the office, appropriate voicemail and out of office email messages are active; | <p>Strong endorsement of out of office email / telephone messages by staff.</p> <p>Recorded messages available on all phones.</p> |

Customer Service Action Plan

Customer Service Complaints

We aim to: deal with issues of customer dissatisfaction with quality of service in an objective, consistent, open and fair manner. Complaints will be addressed as quickly as possible and complainants will be kept informed of progress.

| COMMITMENT | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR |
|---|---|
| 17. Ensure all complaints are addressed promptly, fairly and in a consistent manner. | Audit complaint records to ensure consistent procedures are followed. |
| 18. Ensure staff are aware of the complaints procedure and appeals process and that matters are efficiently resolved. | Staff feedback |

Consultation and Evaluation

We aim to: to engage with our clients and take account of their views and input in the way that we carry out our work. This Charter and Action plan will be consulted to ensure meaningful evaluation and review of service delivery. We welcome your comments and suggestions on this charter and on how we can improve our service in the future. If you would like to comment or make a suggestion please e-mail info@statelab.ie

| COMMITMENT | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR |
|--|---|
| 19. Enable customers to provide feedback on service delivery | Review customer feedback via annual Customer Satisfaction Surveys. Corrective action taken. |

Choice of Contact Methods

We aim to: provide a number of contact channels

| COMMITMENT | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR |
|---|-----------------------|
| 20. Provide a range of contact channels, i.e. phone, email, letter, virtual meetings and one to one meetings with clients | Customer feedback |

Customer Service Action Plan

Internal Customers

We aim to: have our staff recognised as internal customers and ensure that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery.

| COMMITMENT | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR |
|--|--|
| 21 Provide staff with the relevant information and training in their role on providing quality customer service. | Staff training delivered. Feedback mechanism as part of the PMDS process. |

Monitoring & Reporting

We aim to: assess our performance against this plan. We may implement changes to our Charter/and or Action Plan from time to time as may be considered necessary or desirable

Continuous improvement is important to the State Laboratory. We plan for continuous improvement to ensure we provide the best service that we can.



Prepared by The State Laboratory | Backweston Campus | Young's Cross | Celbridge | Co. Kildare