

REPORT ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

**Submitted to the Governor's Office of Budget, Planning and Policy
and the Legislative Budget Board**

by

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June 2018

Background

As required under Chapter 2114 of the Texas Government Code, the Office of Public Utility Counsel (OPUC) created an inventory of external customers and gathered information from those customers using a survey designed to measure customer satisfaction with services provided.

Identification of Customers Served

OPUC represents residential and small commercial consumers, as a class, in electric, telecommunications and water and wastewater utility cases, projects and rulemakings that come before the Public Utility Commission (PUC), the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH), and state and federal courts. The agency intervenes or participates in cases and projects at the direction of the Public Counsel under its statutory authority.¹ In addition, agency staff assists customers with complaints and inquiries, attempting informal resolution whenever possible and referring the customer to an appropriate regulatory agency when needed.

The General Appropriations Act (GAA) for 2018-19 contains two strategies for OPUC. The first strategy is “Participation in Cases” which reflects the agency’s mission of representing residential and small commercial consumers, as a class, in major utility rate cases. OPUC staff represents consumers by thoroughly evaluating the utility’s application, engaging in discovery, filing motions and briefs, presenting direct testimony and rebuttal testimony, and cross-examining other parties’ witnesses. The second strategy is “Utility Projects” which reflects the agency’s responsibility to represent these same consumer classes in major utility projects and rulemakings. OPUC’s participation in utility projects typically involves participating in workshops, filing comments and reply comments, and engaging in stakeholder meetings on behalf of residential and small commercial consumers.

Survey Methods and Response Rates

Since OPUC represents millions of customers, the agency determined it is cost prohibitive to seek out and contact each potentially affected consumer; instead OPUC surveyed those customers that directly contacted OPUC. OPUC receives phone calls, emails, and U.S. mail from utility customers with complaints or inquiries involving a range of issues including but not limited to the following:

- Billing issues
- Bill payment assistance
- Disconnection of service
- Establishing service
- Specific information about ongoing cases, projects or rulemakings

¹ Public Utility Regulatory Act (PURA) §13.003.

The complaints and inquires OPUC receives specific to certain cases or projects is small in comparison to complaints and inquiries related to billing and service issues. Over the previous two fiscal years, the agency did not receive any calls regarding projects or rulemakings and only received customer inquiries regarding 45 docketed cases which represented eight percent (8%) of all calls.

Following the resolution of a customer complaint or inquiry, OPUC sends a Customer Service Survey (CSS) by U.S. Postal Service to the customer if the customer provided a mailing address. For customers that did not provide a mailing address, a CSS was not sent. OPUC received a total of 536 customer calls and sent 387 surveys out. The number of respondents to OPUC’s CSS was 27 out of 387 or seven percent (7%). All responses were returned by U.S. Postal Service. OPUC provided a self-addressed return envelope with each CSS but did not include return postage.

In an effort to improve this low response rate, the agency will begin surveying customers electronically via Survey Monkey, an Internet survey service provider. Additionally, the agency will send hard copy surveys through the mail, with postage-paid return envelopes, to customers who may not have email capability or simply prefer to receive the survey in the mail.

Customer Service Quality Chart

Customer Service Quality Standard	Level of Customer Satisfaction
Telephone call, email or letter was routed to proper staff.	100%
Telephone call, email or letter was answered timely.	100%
Agency website was well-organized and easy to use	100%
Staff interacted in a personal and professional manner.	93%
Staff was knowledgeable and demonstrated a willingness to help.	96%
The agency makes it easy to ask questions or to make a complaint.	96%

Analysis and Findings

The majority of respondents were satisfied with agency staff with ninety-six percent (96%) saying staff was knowledgeable and demonstrated a willingness to help, ninety-three percent (93%), believing staff interacted with them in a personal and professional manner, and eighty-

five (85%) satisfied overall with their experience. All respondents indicated they received a timely response and that their inquiry was routed to the proper staff.

Performance Measures

For the previous two fiscal years, agency staff met the agency standards for timely response, returning customer inquiries within twenty-four hours of receipt.

Survey responses for the last two fiscal years indicated a one hundred percent (100%) satisfaction from customers in both receiving a timely response from the agency, and in having their complaint or inquiry routed to the appropriate staff person. OPUC expects its performance for Fiscal Year 2018 to maintain this high standard.

Outcome Measures

Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Expressing Overall Satisfaction with Services Rendered	85%
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Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Identifying Ways to Improve Service Delivery	0%
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Output Measures

Total Customers Surveyed	387
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Total Customers Served	536
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Efficiency Measures

Cost per Customer Surveyed	\$2.84
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Explanatory Measures

Total Customers Identified	536
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Total Customer Groups Inventoried	2
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