

A Rationale for a common Government and NGO statement.

Where the Waterloo Collaborative has adopted the NSW Customer Commitments, the Linker network model had its own Principles and Standards. They were a little broader than the NSW Customer Commitments and incorporated some other common approaches currently still under consideration by the Waterloo Collaborative. The Linker rationale for why a Collaborative needs common principles and standards still applies and provided below. The Linker model was developed by DCJ and NGOs in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

Rationale for a Common approach to Principles and Standards:

At the heart of this model is the belief that we will deliver better services when we collaborate and coordinate our efforts. In everything we do - from how we welcome clients, to our referral processes, and how we pool together resources - if we are easy to find and act together (as a Collaborative), our clients will feel cared for and supported by the system. When service providers work together, all pulling in the same direction, the potential to deliver radically better service is within our reach.

Why are Common Principles and Standards important?

Our clients deserve a consistently high quality of service wherever they go. By introducing common principles and standards we can increase predictability, confidence, quality, and outcomes.

What are the Common Principles and Standards?

A set of principles and standards used by all service providers to deliver consistent practices and quality.

Almost all unified groups of professionals, such as teachers, nurses, and therapists are bound by a shared set of principles and standards. As a unified group of professionals within the Waterloo Collaborative, we need a comparable set of principles and standards to align our work.

The principles and standards will clarify our purpose, help us focus on what does (and does not) need doing, and support clear and consistent decision making.

What Common Principles and Standards are not?

It is not a checklist of dos and don'ts.

What service providers have said is the benefit of common principles and standards.

- Clarity about what is expected of organisations in the Waterloo Collaborative
- Everyone being on the same page about what is expected makes all of us more accountable to each other.
- Consistency across organisations, makes it easier to network.
- Clearer options for assistance and service means a speed up referral process.
- Gives clients a sense of safety and predictability.
- Give service providers confidence when referring clients to other services.
- Helps build a shared commitment to closer communication and client-centred collaboration.
- Clearer options for assistance and service
- Better outcomes for clients: via a supported network, experience and knowledge shared across the region.
- People, families, and the community have more confidence in the whole sector.

How can we promote / uphold common principles and standards in our organisation?

- By involving them in all position descriptions and referring to during recruitment process.
- Investing time in orientation of new staff so they know and understand our common principles and standards.
- All organisations have the common principles and standards integrated into their policies.
- Having them on display for staff and clients to see.

- Referring to them in staff meetings.
- Incorporate into worker induction/training/supervision/appraisals.
- By keeping discussion and learning opportunities open for workers & volunteers.
- Managers within the network support and mentor each other on how to uphold principles and standards.
- Share and reproduce good practice examples across the network.
- Foster healthy complaints culture.
- Leadership within management (model good practice/performance).
- Call out behaviours that don't meet our common principles and standards.

How can we challenge / support other organisations in the network who don't uphold our common principles and standards?

- Develop agreed steps/systems within the Local Waterloo Collaborative that is respectful and confidential.
- Collectively agree on how to 'report problems' in a safe and constructive way.
- Establish agreed consequences/supports for failure to meet standards.
- Foster a culture of healthy peer support and peer pressure.
- Agree on a self-assessment tool that can be internally administered by the network.
- Organisations should role model good principles and standards so others can follow.
- Look at examples of good and bad practice (review case studies) to form an evidence base for shared expectations.

Source: Adapted from the Linker Playbook pp 14-15.

The Rationale for Government Agencies Customer Commitments

Customer Commitments support a purpose driven public service. They can:

- Show customers the NSW Government listens, understands their evolving needs, and strives to deliver world-class performance for them.
- Provide a tool to align, engage and empower NSW Government employees behind a world-class ambition to deliver a step change in customer service.
- Enable Government to prioritise action to drive customer-centric outcomes. Align the NSW Government brand to its world-class ambition.

Customer Commitments were created with customers and staff considering global best practice.

- “Help to **manage my expectations** so I can manage my time.”
- “All the **information about me should be in one place.**”
- “It means **doing that bit extra for you** because you are an NSW citizen.”
- “As a customer, you should **know how long it will take.**”
- “**Taking the initiative** to help me.”
- “When staff are **friendly**, you can assume they are **motivated.**”
- “**Makes you feel human, not like a machine.**”
- “If they don’t know the answer they need to know **where to find it.**”
- “I should be able **to trust what they are saying.** If they can’t meet their own deadlines, they should tell me.”
- “You shouldn’t be treating all customers the same.”
- “They don’t need to know everything, but they **should be able to help you.**”
- “It’s **harder to get an answer when something does go wrong.**”
- “I need someone to take ownership.”
- “You **shouldn’t have to be referred to lots of different people.**”

Customer Commitments can support several activities.

- **Engaging Customers** - The Commitments are based on known drivers of satisfaction and let customers know what level of service they can expect when they see the Waratah.
 - The NSW Government Commitments can incrementally replace public-facing agency commitments, charters, and principles.
 - In due course, customers can use the Commitments to hold Government to account across all services.
- **Building Customer Culture** - An aspirational ambition can inspire, unite, and empower employees.
 - The Commitments articulate the customer experience the NSW Government aims to deliver. Staff ownership of refining and delivering on these Commitments, regardless of service type, can strengthen customer culture across Government.
 - The Commitments can inform training and recruitment processes.
- **Guiding Planning and Measurement** - Improving customer satisfaction is a key outcome targeted in strategic and business plans.
 - The Commitments can support teams prioritise effort based on known drivers of satisfaction.
 - The Commitments are designed to be measurable, noting survey questions may need to be translated into the specific service context.
- **Supporting Whole of Government Decision Making** - A view across Government services of the extent to which commitments are being met will support prioritisation of resources and action.

- Measurement against the Commitments will build a picture of where investment and focus is required at a whole-of-government level. Measurement may be undertaken centrally or by agencies.

Measurement is key to improving satisfaction.

- **Measuring performance against the Commitments will help prioritise effort.**

Many agencies already have considerable expertise in understanding their customers in the context of the services they deliver.

The more services that are measured against the Commitments, the greater the opportunities to gain new insights from whole-of-government research and comparisons from similar services.

Without prioritising effort based on the known drivers of customer satisfaction, agencies can spend resources on improving customer experience on attributes:

- that customers do not consider as the most important to them.
- where customer satisfaction already meets or exceeds expectations.
- **Prioritising effort on attributes that are most likely to lift overall satisfaction is the most efficient use of resources.**

Determine which performance against a commitment must lift to increase customer satisfaction based on:

- the gap between customer satisfaction and customer expectation with this commitment against this service.
- the importance that customers place with this commitment against this service.

Source: This Government rationale has been adapted from a presentation on the NSW Government Customer Commitments

Customer Service NSW prepares toolkits and guides for NSW Government agencies which might also assist NSW Government Agencies. Resources for NSW Government agencies can be found on the NSW Governments Customer Experience Unit's [CX Hub](#).

Waterloo Collaborative Rationale for adopting the NSW Customer Commitments

The NSW Customer Commitments provide a whole of government customer service framework across NSW Government Departments and Agencies. Over time all existing government department and agency customer service statements are encouraged to align with the NSW Customer Commitments. The NSW Customer commitments are also to be reflected in an organisation's KPIs, satisfaction measurement and continual customer improvement strategies.

While the NSW Customer commitments provide a common customer service framework across NSW Government agencies, Council and NGOs are not bound by the NSW Commitments. However, as the government framework seems consistent with current NGO and Council customer service approaches the NSW Customer Commitments were also seen as a common approach that could be adopted across both the government and NGO partners of the Waterloo Collaborative.

The NSW Customer Commitments are intended as a framework to be used by individual agencies to develop and improve their own customer service approaches. It is expected the commitments will be imbedded in agencies own customer service statements but that those statements will be tailored to the activities that an agency undertakes. As a result, individual agency customer service statements are different but need to align with the NSW Customer Commitments. Resources for NSW Government agencies can be found on the NSW Governments Customer Experience Unit's [CX Hub](#).

So, while the Collaborative is working in only one suburb and cannot override agencies' own policies and customer service statements, because of the need for agencies to have policies that align with the NSW Customer Commitments, it is possible to use the NSW Customer Commitments as an agreed common aspiration for customer service across the Collaborative and its actions. For service users it creates a common expectation as to the kind of service they should expect from Collaborative agencies. It is also a basis for reporting customer service improvements, the celebration of great customer service, and customer service training as required within the Collaborative's membership.

The NSW Customer Commitments are a starting point for our joint approach to customer service. As the action plan is implemented, the customer commitments may be customised by the Collaborative to fit the specifics of our joint Government NGO place-based service delivery context, in the same way, government agencies might customise the commitments to fit their specific activities.

Some Customer Service Statements when the Collaborative made its decision were:

NSW Government

- [NSW Customer Commitments](#) and the resources at the NSW Governments Customer Experience Unit's [CX Hub](#)
- Department of Communities and Justice
 - [Code of Ethical Conduct - Communities and Justice](#)
 - [DCJ Child Protection Services Practice Framework](#)
 - [Understanding roles and responsibilities in the sector](#)
- Department of Communities and Justice Housing
 - [NSW Department of Communities and Justice Housing Practice Standards](#)
 - [DCJ Housing's obligations | Family & Community Services](#)
 - [Client Service Delivery and Appeals Policy](#)
- Land and Housing Corporation - [Maintenance Page](#)
- Education [Customer Service Statement](#)
- [Police Customer Service Program](#)
- NSW Health [Your healthcare rights and responsibilities](#) (Some parts of SLHD have additional customer service guidance, e.g. at the Dental Hospital)

Local Government

- City of Sydney [Customer Service Charter](#)