

Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2027



Acknowledgement of Country

Bayside Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians,
the Gadigal/Bidjigal people of the Eora Nation.

The people of the Eora Nation, their spirit and ancestors will always
remain with our waterways and the land – our Mother Earth.



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Introduction

Purpose

We know service expectations are changing, including how our customers define quality customer service. To meet or exceed these expectations Bayside must continually review, refine and adapt what we do and how we do it. We understand that every interaction shapes the customer's perception and feeling about Bayside Council.

In addition, we understand a customer may have several contacts with more than one person from Council via a range of channels including phone, face to face or digital as well as other touchpoints that may not be with a person at all - for example, visiting a Council facility or website. Each of these contacts or touchpoints forms part of a customer's service experience.

Industry best-practice and global trends are moving to a broader, more contemporary definition of Customer Experience as an overarching concept - encompassing traditional ideas of customer service along with recognition of the entire end to end customer journey with Council.

The global pandemic (COVID-19) has forced businesses and communities to rethink how to interact with each other resulting in a stronger focus on digital and contactless solutions and simpler streamlined processes that enable the customer to access information and services anywhere and at any time.

To keep pace with industry trends and evolving customer needs and expectations, Bayside Council needs to think ahead and plan strategically.

Aim

The Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2027 sets out the strategic direction to ensure that we provide the services and standards our customers need and expect now and into the future.

The strategy is the first for Bayside Council since the former City of Botany Bay and former Rockdale Council amalgamated in 2016. It provides a holistic vision for what is Quality Customer Service and a road map on how we will achieve that vision.

Objective

The Customer Experience Strategy aligns with our organisation values and assists in further defining 'Quality Service' standards. The document sets a clear vision and direction for the organisation to consistently deliver quality customer service that our community want, need and expect now and into the future.

Our values

Visionary Leadership: We are all leaders, decisive, outward focused and forward thinking, setting the vision for Bayside Council today and into the future.

Empowered People: We support and invest in each other, creating a strong collaborative culture.

Meaningful Relationships: We are courageous and innovative, committed to making a difference in our work.

Exceptional Service: We go above and beyond, delivering an outstanding customer experience every time.



How we developed the strategy

The development of the strategy included:

- ▶ Research of Local Government trends, Customer Experience and Service industry trends and global best practice models.
- ▶ Review and analysis of Bayside Council's customer service operations and data and assessed them against industry benchmarks and standards.
- ▶ Engagement with customers and staff.
- ▶ Collaboration across Council teams fostering integration and ownership of the strategy and action plan. Many of these team members are also residents and customers of Bayside.

About Bayside

Bayside stretches over 29 suburbs from Bexley and Kingsgrove in the west, to Pagewood and Daceyville in the east, Arncliffe in the north through to Mascot and down to the coastal communities of Brighton Le Sands and Sandringham. It is a cultural mix of communities from Australia and all over the world living in a diverse landscape of urban sprawl, medium density and high-rise development, alongside beautiful beaches, parklands, and natural wetlands. The area has an emerging identity and a future filled with promise and opportunity.

Central to the area are the state significant transport hubs of Kingsford Smith International Airport in Mascot and Port Botany container terminal which provide an entry point for NSW's and Australia's tourism and goods. These gateways are important to the economy of Sydney and the nation and are supported by large areas of industrial employment and urban services, including the Botany Industrial Park. Transport infrastructure providing connections to destinations across the city, state and country emanate from here.

Changing and emerging patterns of employment coupled with improvements to existing public transport links and State Government plans for new Train Links and light rail services will strengthen Bayside's position as a location of choice for residential living.



Our services

Councils across Australia are managing increasing and competing demands on ever-tightening budgets and the demand to do more with less have never been greater. However, by placing the customer at the centre of everything we do, our goal is to provide the best service possible to our ever-growing population.

Every Bayside team member plays a critical role in delivering quality customer service and commitment:

- ▶ Customer-facing teams deal directly with external customers.
- ▶ Other areas within Council provide indirect support and service to customer-facing teams ensuring they have the tools and information at their disposal to provide an exceptional level of service.

Customer service channels

Currently, we interact with customers through multiple channels/touchpoints including:

- ▶ Face to face at one of our service centres
- ▶ By phone
- ▶ Email and regular mail
- ▶ Feedback forms via our website
- ▶ Digitally via our website and mobile apps
- ▶ Multiple payment options
- ▶ Council facilities such as libraries, parks and leisure facilities
- ▶ Council social media platforms

Our community's preference (from the community feedback received) is to be a 'digital first' organisation that enables customers to interact seamlessly with us via online channels at any time.



2022/2023 services snapshot



Over
483,000
website users



1.5M
web page views



76,370
calls were received



36,491
customer requests
were registered



54,013
emails were received
(via council email)



18,321
counter visits



30,577
library memberships



2,032
animal registrations



Over
55,000
rate notices issued
per quarter



829
resident parking
permits issued

Comparison with previous years

In comparison to previous years data the following customer trends have been identified:

- ▶ Phone calls peaked in 21/22, due to COVID-19, yet since calls have decreased by 8%.
- ▶ Counter interactions have also continued to decrease over a monthly average:
 - ▶ These decreases reflect more online services being made available and the customer's continued want for digital first engagements.
 - ▶ It would be expected that face to face and phone engagements will continue to decrease as more digital services are available.
- ▶ Online transactions are continuing to increase:
 - ▶ Website users have increased from around 35K per month (2019) to 38K in the 2023 calendar year.
 - ▶ The amount of time each user is on the site has also increased over the past two years.
 - ▶ Web users are on average are spending more time on the Bayside website because they find their desired information sooner and spend more time completing transactions online.
 - ▶ Emails direct to Bayside quadrupled in the last three years. Yet in the first half of 2023, we have seen an 8% decrease. This customer behaviour is expected to continue to decrease as more self-service options are available.



Our customers

Our customers are diverse in their backgrounds, needs and expectations when connecting with Council.

We understand that depending on their involvement and the type of interaction, they may have differing expectations. For example, we acknowledge that businesses sometimes have different needs than residents and community groups may be seeking support in ways that might be different from visitors to our LGA.

A customer includes anyone who connects with Council for a range of reasons.

They include:

- ▶ Citizens including residents, ratepayers, and visitors
- ▶ Future residents who will be affected by current decisions
- ▶ Industry and Small Business
- ▶ Business Partners
- ▶ Other Government Departments and Agencies
- ▶ Councillors, as elected representatives of the community
- ▶ Community Groups
- ▶ Council Staff



What our customers told us

As part of this strategy's development, we engaged with our customers and the community to define what quality customer service means to them. The engagement undertaken included focus groups and a community satisfaction survey, which has helped us understand the current levels of satisfaction when interacting with Council and the community's priorities for the delivery of customer service in the future.

Customer satisfaction survey data

Overall customer service satisfaction was
3 out of 5

54% of residents
felt the overall customer service was above average or excellent

Next step explained
is a key driver for customer satisfaction

Satisfaction with
personal interactions
was rated higher than online and email

Libraries & Parks
deliver the highest level of customer satisfaction

82% of customers
found it easy to interact with Council

43% of enquiries
were addressed on first contact

The top reason for contacting Council is
to report or follow up
on a request

83% of customers
believe our staff are helpful, friendly and polite

27% of customers
satisfaction was above average for online and email interactions

Key satisfaction drivers

Bayside customers confirmed 'Addressing their enquiry' is the key driver of satisfaction in the provision of quality customer service.

The top 6 drivers of satisfaction were confirmed resoundingly from the data collected as follows.

- ▶ Addressing the enquiry
- ▶ Knowledge
- ▶ Next step explained
- ▶ Easy to interact
- ▶ Willingness to assist
- ▶ Helpful and friendly.

Across the engagement activities, we heard that:

- ▶ Customers want ease of access to find information and to transact quickly and easily with Council including online
- ▶ Customers want more online solutions to transact with Council at any time on any device
- ▶ Customers acknowledge that staff are generally polite, friendly and helpful
- ▶ Customers want to be heard and treated fairly
- ▶ Customers want a consistent level of knowledge and service standard provided across Council
- ▶ Customers want the next step to be explained
- ▶ If the matter cannot be addressed at first point of contact, then:
 - ▶ They are transferred to the appropriate officer with the knowledge and skill to resolve the matter; and/or
 - ▶ Contacted promptly by the appropriate officer with the knowledge and skill to resolve the matter.
- ▶ Customers want to be acknowledged when they contact Council, to be kept informed about their matter and notified of the outcome within a reasonable time frame.

Areas that were identified for Bayside to focus on:

- ▶ Ability to transact with council online at any time including lodging and tracking requests, submitting forms and finding information to answer an enquiry
- ▶ Addressing customer enquiries and requests at first point of contact
- ▶ Upskilling staff and providing systems to assist with the knowledge and information to address customer enquiries
- ▶ Updating customers on the progress of their requests
- ▶ Faster answering of calls and completing customer call-backs
- ▶ Ability to interact with Council outside of standard business hours
- ▶ Improved consistent communication across all methods of contact including online.

Becoming a customer focused organisation

Through our strategy implementation, to help become a customer focused organisation, we expect to see greater alignment with customer service industry trends including:

- ▶ Whole of Council ownership for improving customer service
- ▶ Staff performance improvements
- ▶ Increase ease when dealing with Council – 24/7
- ▶ Increase digital channels across all devices
- ▶ Acknowledge and address customer enquiries at first point of contact
- ▶ Updating customers on the progress of their requests, with personal yet consistent messaging
- ▶ Desire to capture the voice of the customer and reflect it in decision making
- ▶ Reflect services and offerings based on changes in society.

These improvements will offer the following benefits and support Bayside Council's commitment to quality customer service.

They will:

- ▶ Make it easier to deal with us
- ▶ Enhance accessibility and availability
- ▶ Drive efficiencies across the organisation
- ▶ Support automated and simplified workflows.
- ▶ Improve service levels
- ▶ Reduce complaints
- ▶ Empower the customer

How our customers can help Bayside

Customer focused organisations not only understand what they need to do to become customer focused, they also ask their customers to help meet their commitment to quality customer service.

Bayside asks its customers to:

- ▶ Treat our staff and other customers with respect and courtesy
- ▶ Provide us with accurate and timely information to assist us to action the matter
- ▶ Provide us with contact details when required, so we can keep you informed of the result
- ▶ Work with us to resolve the query
- ▶ Keep us informed of relevant information or changes so we can provide support and advice
- ▶ Understand we may need to refer you to a specialist to assist with complex enquiries and requests
- ▶ Provide honest and constructive feedback about what we are doing well and what we can do better.

Bayside customer experience strategic framework

Our Customer Experience vision, principles and key focus areas were formed by what our customers told us, an operational review, data analysis and an assessment of our maturity against benchmark standards and industry best practice.

Our vision is that **we deliver quality customer service every time you interact with us.**

To achieve this vision, we must consider how our customers engage with Bayside at every point of their journey, including using our services, finding information, making enquiries, completing transactions, and everywhere in between.

The total sum of these interactions will impact our customer's experience, perception and feeling about Bayside Council.



To achieve a quality customer experience, we must adhere to these key principles:



Service

- ▶ Address the enquiry
- ▶ With the correct information
- ▶ At the first point of contact
- ▶ With the next step explained
- ▶ By helpful and friendly staff
- ▶ Be updated with the progress of their request



Information Management

- ▶ Information is discoverable, accessible and usable, at the right time
- ▶ Information is valued as an asset
- ▶ Information is appropriately gathered from the community



Look & Feel

- ▶ The community is proud of the local area
- ▶ The local area is always looking its best
- ▶ Services are designed to meet the community's needs
- ▶ The community feels confident with Council's services



Self Service

- ▶ The community can access information and transact with Council anytime
- ▶ The community understands how to deal with Council

Four key focus areas of People, Technology & Data Systems and Governance outline the strategic direction and actions to achieve this vision.

Our focus areas

This section sets out our roadmap for the delivery of contemporary customer experience at Bayside. We have developed four strategic focus areas and statements of intent that will guide our future planning and decision making.



Focus Area 1: People and Culture

Council staff deliver quality customer service every time you interact with us. Our friendly, helpful and knowledgeable staff will aim to address your matter at first point of contact or ensure that you are put in contact with someone who can.

Goals

- 1.1 Our highly valued staff have the knowledge, skills, tools and support to provide quality customer service.
- 1.2 Through strong leadership focused on the customer, our capability to provide quality customer experience grows.
- 1.3 We will develop and promote a culture of customer service excellence and continued improvement across Council.



Focus Area 2: Technology

Our technology and systems will make it simpler, faster and easier to deal with us at any time from any device and across any channel.

Goals

- 2.1 Bayside will continue to invest and enhance in technology and digital solutions to improve the customer experience and empower staff to deliver.
- 2.2 Online services provide easy capability for customers to self-serve the range of common simple transactions including payments, bookings and lodging requests.



Focus Area 3: **Data, Information and Processes**

Data, business intelligence and customer insights will drive performance expectations and inform the prioritisation of process improvements to improve customer service and the customer experience journey. Our customers are kept informed and can access current and relevant information with ease.

Goals

- 3.1 Our customer centric systems, business processes and forms are streamlined and improved making it more efficient for customers to deal with us.
- 3.2 We use customer intelligence and data to help drive and prioritise customer experience initiatives that increase customer service satisfaction.
- 3.3 We have mechanisms in place that ensure our data and information is kept up date and is relevant in assisting our customers.



Focus Area 4: **Governance and Performance**

We will build trust with our customers by keeping them informed, providing good governance, seeking and acting on feedback and reporting on our performance.

Goals

- 4.1 Through good governance, transparency and accountability we build trust with our customers to remain committed to delivering quality customer experience.
- 4.2 We provide customer service performance visibility to our customers.
- 4.3 We regularly engage with our customers and the industry and seek feedback about our performance to inform future plans and improvements in customer service.
- 4.4 We establish, measure and report on our customer service performance and focus on improving areas that don't meet customer satisfaction standards.

Implementing the strategy

To enable the implementation of the Customer Experience Strategy's vision and framework, Bayside will embark on a cultural change program that will aim to shift the organisation's culture towards customer centricity, where Bayside always puts the customer's needs first and is dedicated to enhancing our customers experience and satisfaction.

The program will also involve employee engagement principles, to help all Bayside staff feel empowered and skilled to deliver quality customer service, no matter their role. Ultimately aiming to create a culture that supports our customer experience vision, values, encourages innovation, and fosters positive relations between employees and customers.

Bayside's Cultural Change Program – Be Better for Bayside

Our motto: *Its up to me! To Become Better, Do Better, Be Better*

This Program will be implemented over three stages, as follows:

STAGES	OBJECTIVE
1. Become Better	Improve what we do now
2. Do Better	Change the way we do business to make further improvements
3. Be Better	Remain customer focused across all our processes

Following are the improvement projects that will help deliver the cultural change program. Each project will evolve as the stages are implemented.



Improvement Projects

Focus Areas 1 – People

PROJECT	INTENT
Working Group	Establish a cross divisional Customer Experience working Group to focus on improving customer experience across the business, using data and customer insights to drive priorities.
Customer Experience Structure	Align our Customer Experience resource structure to meet customer service needs and service standards.
Internal Engagement	Conduct engagement with all internal teams to assess what each needs to do to achieve 'Be Better for Bayside'. Assess their current processes, structure, technology and skills.
Learning & Development	Develop and implement learning and development program to support staff to deliver quality customer service, tailored to a variety of customer channels and standards.
Staff Recruitment & Performance	Review staff performance work plans and position descriptions to include outcome-based performance indicators focused on quality customer service. Review onboarding program for new staff to ensure customer service standards and practices are communicated and embedded.
Leadership Engagement	Implement Leadership program that develops Bayside's leader's behaviour to facilitate and inspire employees, enhance employee engagement and improve customer's journey.
Internal Communications	Develop internal communications strategy and action plan to ensure corporate messages are appropriately shared and understood across the organisation.
Corporate & Councillor Communications	Investigate new communication channels and standards to improve corporate and Council related updates for stakeholders and Council.
Dealing with Unreasonable Customers	Develop procedures for dealing with unreasonable customers.

Focus Area 2 – Technology

PROJECT	INTENT
Correspondence	Investigate using Council's record management system to track and manage correspondence received from customers and report on performance against service standards.
Knowledge Base	Implement a Knowledge Management System that provides staff with fast and accurate information to address to customer enquiries at first point of contact.
Improve Request Management	Review the use of the Customer Request Management and other available systems with updates and training. Improve responsiveness to customer service requests. Investigate the use of digital and automated solutions to communicate with customers and keep them informed about of their request, enquiry or matter.
Website & Social Media	Improve and continue to enhance the access, usability, and relevance of Bayside's website and social media platforms to become the source of truth and transaction.
Online Services	Continue to enhance digital self-service capability and functionality to improve customer experience and satisfaction for transactions including payments, bookings, lodging applications and requests.

Focus Area 3 – Data, Information and Processes

PROJECT	INTENT
Email Review	Review and consolidate customer facing email addresses and routing to improve responsiveness, monitoring and reporting on performance.
Channel Review	Improve data collation for all customer service channels and continue to enhance customer intelligence dashboards to identify opportunities to improve customer experience and satisfaction across all channels.
Business Processes	Review and streamline business processes and forms to improve customer experience, reduce administrative workload and improve response times.
Service Reviews	Review technology, processes, and practices of departments to ensure availability to respond to customer requests within agreed service standards.
Information Consistency	Bayside's website and public information platform's content is kept up to date with relevant information to assist the customer.
Customer Data Intelligence	Improve data collation for all customer service channels and continue to enhance customer intelligence dashboards to identify opportunities to improve customer experience and satisfaction across all channels.

Focus Area 4 – Governance & Performance

PROJECT	INTENT
Customer Experience Strategy, Policy & Procedures	Create a Customer Service Policy and Governance Guidelines across Council to improve consistency and accountability in delivering quality service to our customers.
Performance Metrics	Define, establish, and report on Customer Service performance metrics to help us to improve our service responses and align our service delivery priorities to meet those needs.
Customer Feedback	Develop and implement customer service satisfaction survey to regularly measure our performance.
Strategy Alignment and Updates	Ensure the implementation of the Strategy is regularly reviewed and aligns with industry standards and other Bayside strategies.

Measuring Success

The Customer Experience Strategy will be reported through Council’s existing mechanisms, such as the Deliver Program and Operational Plan.

Council will measure and report on the following:

Customer Experience Responsiveness

- ▶ Number of calls addressed at first point of contact. Target: > 70%
- ▶ Number of digital customer requests received. Target: Increase
- ▶ Number of correspondence received and addressed within agreed levels of service. Target: > 70%

Customer Experience Improvement

Report on progress of projects in key areas to embed improvements to Customer Experience:

- ▶ People
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Data, Information and Processes
- ▶ Governance and Performance.

Customer Experience Satisfaction

- ▶ Develop and implement a program to regularly capture and report on customer experience satisfaction.

Strategic alignment

Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework

The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework allows Council to bring all our plans and strategies together so that we have a clear vision and an agreed roadmap for delivering community priorities and aspirations. It requires us to take a long-term approach to planning and decision making and emphasises the responsibility to deliver and report back to the community on our progress.

The Delivery Program outlines the strategic priorities of our Council to deliver the vision and aspirations of the community contained in the Community Strategic Plan: Bayside 2032.

The Operational Plan contains the activities and actions Council will undertake for the financial year in accordance with the adopted budget.

The Customer Experience Strategy is a supporting strategy for a framework (see next page).

Our Customer Experience Strategy is supported by several documents:

- ▶ **Customer Experience Charter**

Is Council's commitment statement to customers in providing exceptional customer service. The document outlines what customers can expect when interacting with Councils and includes standards of behaviour and services. The Charter underpins Bayside Council's Customer Experience Strategy and Policy.

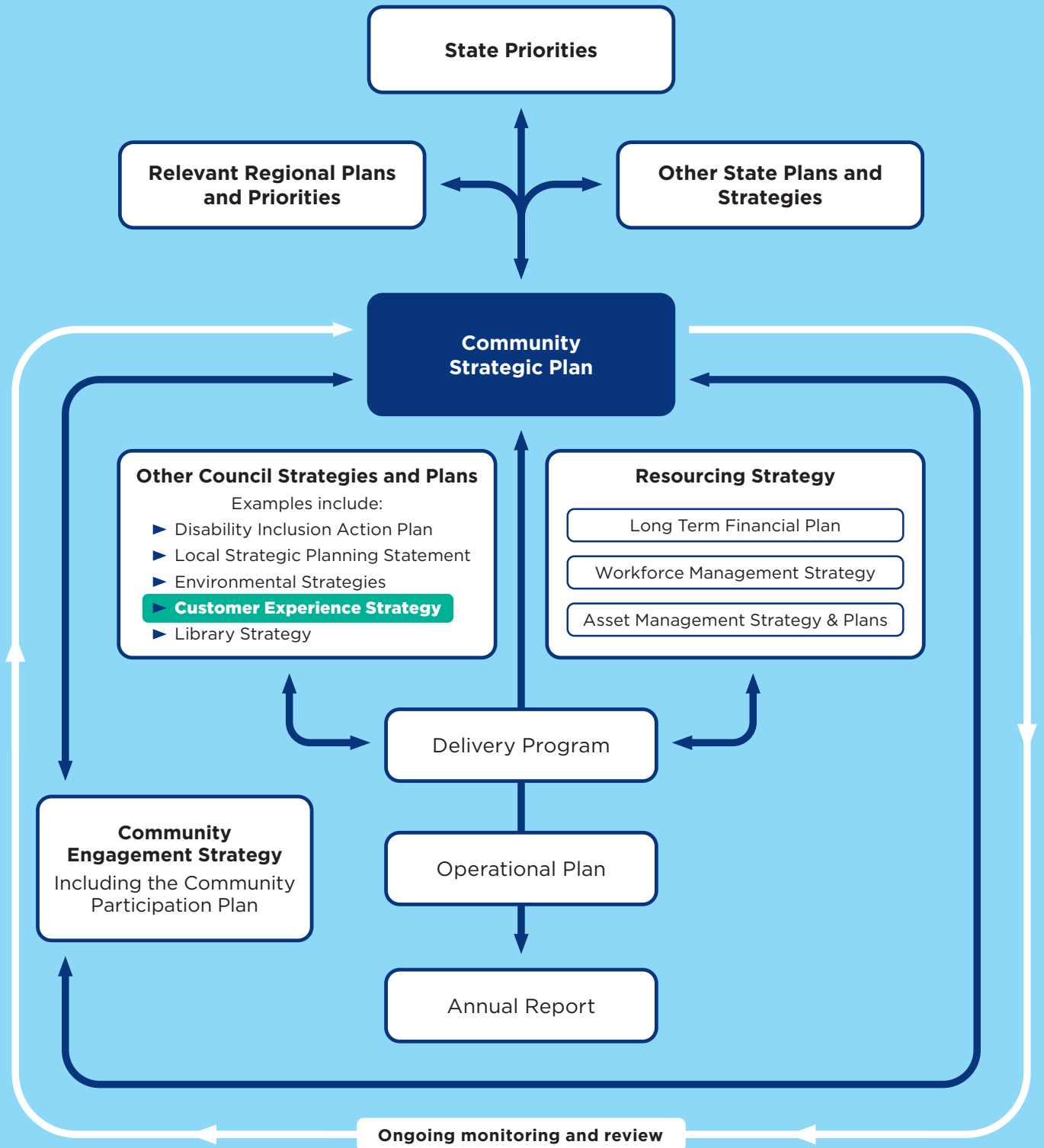
- ▶ **Customer Experience Policy**

Documents Council's statement of intent and guiding principles in providing exceptional service.

- ▶ **Customer Experience Guidelines and Operational Procedures**

Outlines processes, protocols, roles and responsibilities and standards for staff to deliver exceptional customer service.

Strategic alignment within the IP&R Framework



Bayside Customer Service Centres

Rockdale Library, 444-446 Princes Highway, Rockdale
Westfield Eastgardens, 152 Bunnerong Road, Eastgardens
Monday to Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm

Phone **1300 581 299 | 9562 1666**
Email **council@bayside.nsw.gov.au**
Web **www.bayside.nsw.gov.au**



Telephone Interpreter Services - 131 450

Τηλεφωνικές Υπηρεσίες Διερμηνέων بخدمة الترجمة الهاتفية 電話傳譯服務處 Служба за преведување по телефон