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HEALTH CANADA EXTERNAL CHARGING GUIDELINES

Guideline On Service Standards

This is one in a series of documents developed to supplement the Health Canada External Charging Policy and provide Health Canada managers with guidance on issues related to the use of external charging.

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Prepared by:
Revenue and Costing Section
Financial Operations Directorate
Chief Financial Officer Branch
In conjunction with
Health Canada Committee on External Fees

Canada

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SERVICE STANDARDS

1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This is one of a series of guidelines developed to provide Health Canada managers with guidance on issues related to the use of fees. The guidelines are intended to be applicable to most Health Canada programs, but it is the responsibility of the user to consider the specific circumstances in each case and adapt the guidance accordingly.
- 1.2 This guideline covers issues related to the establishment of service standards for external charging. Its primary focus is to identify elements and processes in developing appropriate service standards, including the applicable legislation and policies, stakeholder consultations, service delivery capability and capacity, as well as performance measurement and reporting and should be read in context of the Health Canada External Charging Policy, the Treasury Board Policy on Service Standards for External Fees, and the *User Fees Act*.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Service standards can be considered delivery targets which describe the key aspects of the service supplied -- such as access, timeliness and accuracy – and how this will be measured. Service standards are the description of what stakeholders should expect from the services being provided and the way in which the services will be delivered.
- 2.2 Service standards should be developed to benefit Health Canada and its stakeholders. The service standards should be developed to allow Health Canada to detect and correct problems, to manage and improve processes and to document accomplishments.
- 2.3 “Properly established service standards provide an objective test of an organization’s ability to meet customer service requirements. Regularly measuring and reporting actual performance against standards helps management identify problem areas and assess performance trends over time. Where services involve user charges, service standards help demonstrate to users the value they receive for the fees they pay.”
- Report of the Auditor General of Canada
- 2.4 As the government’s general manager, Treasury Board and its Secretariat establish policies and standards for service delivery.
 - 2.4.1 Program managers are encouraged to first read the TBS “Service Standards: a Guide to the Initiative” before embarking on a project. The Guide provides a government approach to develop and manage service standards and identifies its principles. It also discusses each step of developing service standards extensively.
 - 2.4.2 Other related TBS information can be found in the reference section below. A summary of needs and considerations derived from these documents is identified in Appendix A¹. The Department should follow and comply with the TBS guidelines and policies unless there are justifiable reasons not to do so. Key TBS materials and concepts on service standards are highlighted in this guide.

¹Source: Framework for Service Standards, Report of the Interdepartmental Sub-Working Group on Service Standards, May 2, 2005

3. Discussion

3.1 Implications of Policy on Service Standards for External Fees and of the *User Fees Act*:

- 3.1.1 The Department should develop standards in such a way that performance against them can be reported. Service standards for external fees should be quantifiable.
- 3.1.2 In general, there is a direct relationship between service standards and the cost of providing a service. The cost, in turn, drives the fees. Stakeholders need to be fully informed of the tradeoff between affordability and service standards.
- 3.1.3 The Department has designated the Chief Financial Officer as the champion for external fees. Traditionally, the Chief Financial Officer Branch has been co-ordinating the DPR User Fees Information, which includes service standards at the departmental level, while the Branches collected the information from their respective programs that are responsible for establishing the service standards. To facilitate the reporting requirements of both the TBS Policy and the *User Fees Act*, this practice should continue.

3.2 Principles²:

3.2.1 Service standards should be:

- 3.2.1.1 Meaningful to stakeholders. Service standards should relate to aspects of the service, which the paying and non-paying stakeholders find relevant, and should be expressed in terms to which stakeholders can relate. Standards must be measurable, and how performance will be measured should be clearly defined;
- 3.2.2.2 Based on consultation. Both paying and non-paying stakeholders should be consulted on the standards, including how performance will be measured;
- 3.2.2.3 Comparable to those established by other countries with which a comparison is relevant³ and against which performance can be measured. In cases where relevant comparison is not possible, the reasons should be justified and documented;
- 3.2.2.4 Attainable and challenging. Service standards should be reasonable, realistic, practical, based on analysis, consistent with program objectives and achievable;
- 3.2.2.5 Affordable. Service standards should be attainable within available resources being provided. In general, there is a direct relationship between the level of service provided and cost. Increased costs resulting from improved or better service would have to be factored into the fee structure or covered by the appropriation;
- 3.2.2.6 Owned by managers and employees. Service standards should be an essential management tool in service delivery. Programs are responsible for setting and using service standards to continually improve the cost effectiveness of service delivery;
- 3.2.2.7 Published. Service standards should be public and proactive steps taken to make them known to stakeholders;

²Service Standards: A Guide to the Initiative

³Relevancy as determined by the Program. As the criteria for relevancy may differ from one case to another, the definition of relevancy must explicitly and clearly state for each case.

- 3.2.2.8 Used to measure performance. Performance against service standards as well as client satisfaction with the service provided should be reported to stakeholders. A number of methods to measure performance are available, such as collecting data to support quantifiable service standards, client satisfaction surveys etc. The means to measure performance should be determined at the time of establishing the standard; and
- 3.2.2.9 Reviewed and updated. When first introduced service standards may be defined for phased implementation. Once fully implemented, standards should be periodically reviewed and adjusted to reflect new circumstances.

3.3 Steps to consider in developing Service Standards

3.3.1 TBS Service Standards: a Guide to the Initiative provides an in-depth coverage for each of the following steps:

- 3.3.1.1 Know the business - Managers should have a clear understanding of their stakeholders, the potential and existing partners, service they are providing and the type of standards that relate to that service. Current performance levels and capacity for achieving those levels or better should be assessed.
- 3.3.1.2 Consult with stakeholders and staff - This should be a consideration throughout the process to ensure performance standards are meaningful, achievable and acceptable to all. It allows for feedback of what is working and what needs to be fixed, as well as insight for improvement from the front line;
- 3.3.1.3 Set stakeholder-sensitive standards - It ensures stakeholder buy-in to the standards established. Factors critical to good service such as responsiveness, competence, easy access, courtesy, good communication, credibility, reliability and accuracy, or security need to be incorporated;
- 3.3.1.4 Empower and train service providers - It ensures that service providers are aware of the standards and the means of measuring performance so that every effort can be made to meet the standards. It also allows quicker decisions that matter to stakeholders;
- 3.3.1.5 Communicate service standards and report to stakeholders on performance - The standards should not be hidden. They should be published on the website or by some other means so that they are visible to all concerned. It allows stakeholders to know what to expect; and
- 3.3.1.6 Manage to meet service standards and quality - Once the standards have been developed, accepted and published, managers should do everything in their power to ensure the standards are met. Managers should assess the performance against the standard and establishing quality service improvement plan.

3.3.2 Capacity to capture data to assess performance against standards

- 3.3.2.1 For each standard developed, there must be an identification (indicator) of the data required to measure performance against the standard, its source, and the length of time the data will be gathered. All data sources should be credible and cost effective to capture.

- 3.4 Authority, Responsibility and Accountability
- 3.4.1 Program managers must ensure there are appropriate program and departmental legal authorities available to meet any proposed service standards being developed. Consultation with Legal Services is recommended whenever there is any doubt.
- 3.4.2 As mentioned previously, stakeholder consultation should be an integral part of the service standards development process. Topics for stakeholder consultation are diverse and will depend on the relevant circumstance. Nevertheless, consultation is most crucial in areas where the rules and definitions are unclear or information is murky.
- 3.4.2.1 Themes may include but should not be limited to:
- 3.4.2.1.1 Capacity and level of service delivery, both existing and future;
 - 3.4.2.1.2 Opportunities for service improvement
 - 3.4.2.1.3 Relevant international comparators;
 - 3.4.2.1.4 Potential service delivery alternatives;
 - 3.4.2.1.5 Implication of possible changing resource levels;
 - 3.4.2.1.6 Implementation phase(s) of service standards;
 - 3.4.2.1.7 Definition of quality service and how it is best quantified; and
 - 3.4.2.1.8 Assessment of performance against standards.
- 3.4.3 Prior to consultation, program managers should familiarize themselves with the Health Canada Policy Toolkit for Public Involvement in Decision Making.
- 3.4.4 Branches should implement a monitoring and reporting mechanism to ensure standards continue to be met. Service standards should be periodically reviewed to ensure continued relevancy and appropriateness.
- 3.4.5 Care should be taken to ensure that service standards are achievable, given the expected or anticipated resources. Pursuant to Section 5.1 of the *User Fees Act*, standards for user fees that are not met can result in a financial penalty via a reduction of the user fee. The Health Canada Policy on External Charging spells out roles and responsibilities related to the reduction of fees.
- 3.4.6 The Health Canada Guideline on Complaint Resolution and Dispute Management for External Fees details the departmental approach in resolving dispute and complaints relating to external fees.
- 3.5 Information Needs and Information Availability
- 3.5.1 In developing service standards and performance measurement, departmental informatic specialists should be consulted from the beginning to ensure information needs and requirements will be available.
- 3.5.2 There should be a clear linkage between service standards and how the performance results measure up to these standards; explanations may be required in case of shortfalls.
- 3.5.3 Service standards should not be complex. They should be defined in terms of either transaction time, client satisfaction or some other quantifiable measurement.

- 3.5.4 Information and data gathering should be consistent and uniform for reporting and performance measurement. It is particularly important with costing information, which forms the foundation for establishing fees and evaluating performance. The type and other attributes related to the data required will be driven by the standard and should be addressed at the time of establishing the standard as mentioned previously. Questions on data gathering and costing should be referred to the Office of Revenue and Costing at the address mentioned in Section 5 of this Guideline.
- 3.5.5 Monitoring systems should be in place to assess and improve validity and accuracy of data.
- 3.6 Exceptions and exemptions
 - 3.6.1 Stakeholders should explicitly be informed that service and performance standards does not apply under extra-ordinary circumstances (e.g., Act of God). It may be prudent to have the exception and exemption clause written into the standards, in particular those activities and services that fall under the purview of the *User Fees Act*.

4. Reference

- 4.1 Office of Auditor General
 - 4.1.1 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons (March 2004, Chapter 7)
- 4.2 Treasury Board Secretariat
 - 4.2.1 A Policy Framework for Service Improvement in the Government of Canada
 - 4.2.2 Quality and Affordable Service for Canadians: Establishing Service Standards in the Federal Government - An Overview
 - 4.2.3 Service Standards: A Guide to the Initiative
 - 4.2.4 Quality Services - Guide VII - Service Standards
 - 4.2.5 Stretching the Tax Dollar Series - A Guide to Costing of Service Delivery for Service Standards
 - 4.2.6 Policy on Service Standards for External Fees
- 4.3 *User Fees Act*
- 4.4 Health Canada
 - 4.4.1 Health Canada Policy Toolkit for Public Involvement in Decision Making
 - 4.4.2 Health Canada Policy on External Charging

5. Enquiries

- 5.1 Enquiries on this guideline should be directed to:

Revenue and Costing Section
Chief Financial Officer Branch
rsc_src@hc-sc.gc.ca
Tel: (613) 952-9936
Fax: (613) 957-7759

Appendix A

Summary of Service Standards Requirements for TBS Policies and the User Fees Act

1. Service standards are generally considered to include a range of characteristics, but most fundamentally can be considered delivery targets which describe the key aspects of the service supplied – such as access, timeliness and accuracy – and how this will be measured.
2. Service standards include five essential elements:
 - 2.1 Descriptions of service and benefits being provided;
 - 2.2 Pledges or principles describing the quality of service to be delivered;
 - 2.3 Specific delivery targets for key aspects of service, such as timeliness, access and accuracy;
 - 2.4 The costs of delivering the service; and
 - 2.5 Complaint and redress mechanisms that clients can use when they feel standards have not been met
3. Additional characteristics should be addressed as appropriate (e.g., cost, a quality and complaint redress mechanism), but this can be done outside of the service standard per se.
4. Service standard attributes:
 - 4.1 Measurable
 - 4.2 Relevant to stakeholders
 - 4.3. Developed through consultation with both paying and non-paying stakeholders
 - 4.4 Amenable to application of the formula in S.5.1 of the *User Fees Act*
 - 4.5 Comparable to those in relevant comparator countries.
5. Additional interpretation and explanation of service standards requirement can be found in *Service Standards: A Guide to the Initiative*.

Appendix B - An Example

(http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/atip-airpr/Tools/servicestandard_e.asp?format=print)

TREASURY BOARD SECRETARIAT INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND SECURITY POLICY DIVISION (IPSPD)

Service Standards of the Information, Privacy and Security Policy Division

I. The Information, Privacy and Security Policy Division (IPSPD)

We are responsible for the provision of strategic policy advice and assistance to government institutions and Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) policy centres on policies, guidelines and standards concerning access to information, privacy, common look and feel (CLF), proactive disclosure, security and accessibility. We also participate in various interdepartmental committees and assist other governments in the process of adopting access to information and privacy (ATIP) legislation.

We play a lead consultative and advisory role vis-à-vis three communities of practice: ATIP, security and CLF. We also provide internal policy advice to TBS policy centres on related issues that concern the federal government. Given the importance of this role, we are committed to providing high quality, timely and efficient service to our external and internal clients.

II. Our Service Standards

The following service standards focus on three main areas of effective service: quality, timeliness and availability.

In general, we will ensure that the response provided to client institutions is relevant to the circumstances and fulfills the needs of the institution to the greatest extent possible. However, it should be stressed that in terms of providing direction and recommendations to client institutions related to ATIP, security or CLF issues, we provide our services strictly in an advisory capacity. As such, the ultimate responsibility for decisions on such issues rests with you, the client institution. Therefore, it is incumbent on you to consider if further consultations are required with other relevant sources such as your legal services unit, senior management and other stakeholders.

1) Quality

We will provide reliable and consistent policy advice and information on issues related to:

- the Access to Information Act, the Privacy Act, and related Treasury Board policies and guidelines;
- Info Source;
- Common Look and Feel (CLF) Standards;
- the proactive disclosure of government information;
- the Government Security Policy (GSP); and
- the Policy for Public Key Infrastructure Management in the Government of Canada.

Delivery Targets:

- We clarify and understand the nature of advice required and the timeframe for response.
- We ensure that our advice is reliable, consistent and addresses the issue. This may require consultation with IPSPD colleagues and/or internal or external resources as determined by the IPSPD Analyst.

2) Timeliness

We will provide client institutions with advice and information in accordance with the timeframes outlined in the delivery targets.

Delivery Targets:

- We return messages or acknowledge requests within one business day. When appropriate, we will provide a response at that time.
- We negotiate with you a mutually satisfactory timeframe for response.
- Urgent matters will be dealt with on a priority basis. This may impact on an agreed response deadline. If such a situation occurs, we will notify you of any changes to an agreed deadline as soon as possible.

3) Availability

We will inform you of our responsibilities and contact persons, and ensure that you have access to an analyst who will be available to respond to inquiries and questions.

Delivery Targets:

- We communicate significant changes in responsibilities.
- We provide an alternate contact during periods of absence (more than one working day).
- We use clear language.
- We provide advice in the official language of your choice.
- We are accessible to employees working within the related community of practice. Inquiries from other government employees will be referred to their respective departmental specialists who will contact the IPSPD as needed. All institutions should contact IPSPD Analysts based on the subject of their queries.
- Under normal circumstances, Fridays are reserved for IPSPD internal matters.

III. Measurement Tools and Reporting

We welcome direct feedback from client institutions.

We will obtain feedback from the various committees.

Client surveys will be done periodically. A summary of performance results will then be communicated to the community of interest, and a detailed IPSPD performance report will be provided to the appropriate committee(s) for discussion purposes.

IV. Helping Us Help You:

In order to fulfill the commitments outlined in this Service Standard, we recommend that you consider the following prior to seeking advice from IPSPD Analysts.

1. Determine the type of advice that you are seeking:
 - feedback and general discussion with relation to a specific issue;
 - specific documents or statistical information;
 - assistance in identifying alternatives and options with relation to a particular issue;
 - direction or recommendation on how to address a particular issue; or
 - a demonstration on how to accomplish a specific task or work through a particular issue (e.g. instruction, training).

2. .Make use of internal expertise and TB resource documents such as policies, standards, guidelines and implementation reports. Ensure that the issue has been discussed with the institutional ATIP Coordinator, Departmental Security Officer, or CLF specialist, and that preliminary research has been conducted. As a minimum, client institutions should refer to the relevant TB policies, standards, guidelines and implementation reports for guidance prior to requesting advice from an IPSPD Analyst.
3. Coordinate queries by naming one or two individuals within your office to act as liaison agent(s) with the IPSPD. This will prevent situations where different individuals from one institution request advice on the same issue from different IPSPD Analysts, thus minimizing duplication of effort and overlap in responses between IPSPD Analysts.
4. Do not call more than one analyst on a given issue. Please refer to our website for the list of contact persons.
5. Ensure that you present all relevant information when seeking advice. Having all relevant facts, such as specific departmental positions or policies, an overview of discussions that have taken place and the identification of deadlines are all critical factors for IPSPD to assess in determining the urgency and the exact nature of the advice required.
 - The deadline for receiving a response should take into consideration both the institution's needs and the Analyst's workload and schedule.

Your feedback is very important to us. If you have a concern or positive comment about our service, tell the policy analyst or the Unit's manager. When we ask for your views on our services, please respond.

November 2005