APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2017.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Prince William County

Program Title: Prince William Public Library Customer Service Program

Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Andrew Spence

Title: Communication Services Division Cheif

Department: Library

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Christopher E. Martino

Title: County Executive

Signature:

1. Overview

The Prince William Public Library System in Prince William County, Virginia needed a new customer-service training program to align with the library's new vision strategy and to ensure consistency, in service, among new and existing staff, especially as two new branches were being built. Therefore, a Customer Service program was developed by the Library and implemented across the system to support the Library's vision and new customer service philosophy. And in 2016, this effort resulted in achieving the highest customer satisfaction rating of any Prince William County agency, according to the Prince William County Biennial Community Survey, moving three percentage points from 95% to 98%.

2. Problem/Challenge/Situation

The Prince William Public Library System had not implemented system-wide customer service training since the late 1990s, resulting in inconsistent service across its branches. Two main factors drove the new customer service initiative. First, a new Office of Community Engagement and with it, a new branding strategy, was formed in early 2015. Second, two new libraries were slated to open in late 2015/ early 2016, necessitating a large wave of new hires. An ongoing customer-service training program was needed to serve as a vehicle to carry out the new branding strategy and ensure all library staff, whether new or existing, were prepared and expected to deliver consistent customer service at all 11 library branches.

3. Program

Objective:

To provide a consistent, quality experience to all library customers by developing and implementing a standardized customer-service training program required of all staff.

Development and Implementation Timeframe:

Start – The library Assistant Director and Office of Community Engagement formed a Customer Service Team (CST) in June 2015

June 2015 – October 2015: The CST created the framework for the new customer service model and developed a two-hour workshop entitled "Customer Service 101"

October 2015 – February 2016: 14 Customer Service 101 sessions held, beginning with new hires for new branches and extending to existing staff and volunteers

February 2016: Customer Service Team Builders (CSTBs) appointed in each branch to assist with training and facilitating observed behaviors survey

May 2016: CSTB training

June 2016 – September 2016: First wave of observed behaviors survey

September 2016: Customer Service temporary deputies appointed to assist CSTBs with observed behaviors survey and the analysis of first wave of observed behaviors

January 2017: Temporary deputy training

February 2017 – present: Second wave of observed behaviors survey

Ongoing, quarterly: Customer Service 101 for new hires/volunteers

Ongoing, weekly: Customer service messages supplied by CSTBs on a rotating basis

4. Financing and Staffing

Currently, no capital costs associated with the program. In terms of operating costs, the development of the program came together by identifying six library staff members holding specific skills sets crucial to building this program. Those skills sets included: past knowledge of previous customer-service training held at the library, customer-service program development expertise, institutional knowledge of library operations, communications expertise, and on-the-floor perspectives. This said, if no such capacity existed within the Library seeking to replicate this program, these specific skills would need to come from outside consultants at a minimum of two professionals. Moreover, that does not include the continued maintenance and management of the program after any contracted consultants would finish the initial program setup.

Over 55 hours from the Customer Service Team spent developing, initiating and reviewing the program. These hours do not reflect the number of hours our Customer Service Team Builders have contributed who serve directly in the branches and have attended team meetings. Furthermore, the level of effort and time put into this program is dependent upon these team builders' branch, personal initiative and staff schedule.

Other minor costs would include paper, printing and mileage (meeting attendance) as these were necessary to the program. In conclusion, these costs were acceptable and manageable within the current library budget.

5. Program Results

The Prince William Public Library System needed a comprehensive customer-service training program for all new and existing employees to ensure consistency across all branches and to share library messaging and convey products and services. During its initial roll out, over 90% of staff attended Customer Service 101. Since then, nearly all new staff and many volunteers continue to attend quarterly repeats of the session to ensure training and consistency.

Through peer observation and the Customer Service Team Builders, PWPLS's new customer service philosophy will continue to be shared in all library branches. PWPLS now offers a solid customer-service training platform because of adaptable growth the Customer Service Team allow the program that built additional modules to satisfy branch needs and areas of opportunity. Likewise, the Customer Service Team is starting to develop phase two of the customer-service training program.

Implementing a new customer-service training program resulted in an increase of customer satisfaction from 95% in 2014 to 98% in 2016, achieving the highest customer satisfaction rating of any Prince William County agency, according to the 2016 Prince William County Biennial Community Survey. This customer satisfaction rating is built into the performance review of every library staff member, thus improving not only Prince William County's survey rating, but also improving the performance evaluation of library staff. Library Director Deborah Wright stated that the number of positive comments received from customers in 2016 has far exceeded those received in any other preceding years from her recollection.

6. Brief Summary

The Prince William Public Library System in Prince William County, Virginia needed a new customer-service training program to align with the library's new vision strategy and to ensure consistency, in service, among new and existing staff, especially as two new branches were being built.

In June 2015, a Customer Service Team was formed and a standardized training program was developed to support the library's vision and new customer service philosophy. The training program's first phase, Customer Service 101, was delivered to 90% of staff in 14 sessions during late 2015 – early 2016, followed by quarterly sessions to train new hires. In addition, Customer Service Team Builders were recruited from the 11 branches to assist with staff training, convey customer service messaging to branches and to observe their peers in their customer service behaviors.

Implementing a new customer-service training program resulted in an increase of customer satisfaction from 95% in 2014 to 98% in 2016, achieving the highest customer satisfaction rating of any Prince William County agency, according to the Prince William County Biennial Community Survey. This customer satisfaction rating is built into the performance review of every library staff member, thus improving not only Prince William County's survey rating, but also improving the performance evaluation of library staff.

4 STEPS TO BUILDING EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

We practice active awareness.

* We use a **friendly greeting** within **60 seconds** of a customer entering our library or within **six feet** of us.
* We **smile** and make **eye contact**.
* We acknowledge those **waiting** in line.

We conduct a thorough customer interview.

* We use positive body language and **upbeat tone of voice**.
* We **actively listen**, ask clarifying questions, and verify customer's request.

We ensure every customer's needs are fulfilled.

* We keep the **customer informed** of the search process and teach them where possible.
* We **walk the customer** instead of pointing.
* We conduct a smooth **customer handoff** from one staff member to another, **introducing** the staff member and **explaining** the customer's needs.

We thank them and invite them back.

* We **ask** if their needs have been met.
* We **inform** the customer of a **current promotion** or service.
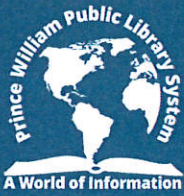* We **thank them** and invite them to return.

NAILED IT!
Customer Service Behaviors Observation Checklist

Observed behaviors (check all that apply)	Objective feedback
Step 1: Active Awareness ☐ Smiles. ☐ Uses friendly greeting within 60 seconds/ six feet, using a phrase of courtesy. ☐ Makes eye contact. ☐ Acknowledges all waiting in line.	
Step 2: Customer Interview ☐ Uses positive body language. ☐ Uses upbeat tone of voice. ☐ Actively listens to patron's request. ☐ Asks clarifying questions and verifies request. ☐ Performs customer handoff if applicable. *Handoff:* Walks patron over, introduces staff member, paraphrases request.	
Step 3: Customer Fulfillment ***If there is a line:*** ☐ Acknowledges every person at least with a smile or eye contact. ☐ Says "Someone will be with you in a minute." ***If able to fully service request:*** ☐ Keeps customer informed of search progress. ☐ Teaches the customer where possible. ☐ Walks them to the section: stacks, restroom, computer, etc. ***If handing off to appropriate staff:*** ☐ Makes the transition smooth. ☐ Walks the customer to the appropriate staff person. ☐ Introduces staff to patron. ☐ Explains customer's needs before handing off. ☐ Asks "Have I completely answered your question?"	
Step 4: Thanking the Customer ☐ Promotes branch's designated service or promotion, tailored to the transaction. ☐ Thanks patron for coming in and invites them back.	

NAILED IT! THE FOUNDATION OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

Prince William Public Library System

Prince William Public Library System — A World of Information

Our customer service philosophy: *We treat every customer as if it's their first time.*

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Step 1: Active Awareness ☐ Smiles. ☐ Uses friendly greeting within 60 seconds/ six feet, using a phrase of courtesy. ☐ Makes eye contact. ☐ Acknowledges all waiting in line.	-Always use your name when answering the phone. -You are encouraged to give your name during a face-to-face interaction. "My name is Leslie; please let me know if I can help you with anything," for example.
Step 2: Customer Interview ☐ Uses positive body language. ☐ Uses upbeat tone of voice. ☐ Actively listens to patron's request. ☐ Asks clarifying questions and verifies request. ☐ Performs customer handoff if applicable. *Handoff:* Walks patron over, introduces staff member, paraphrases request.	-Be mindful of the phone handoff: When you transfer a patron to another coworker, paraphrase the request so patron doesn't have to repeat. -Let them fully state their request and repeat it back to them to be sure you've understood.
Step 3: Customer Fulfillment *If there is a line:* ☐ Acknowledges every person at least with a smile or eye contact. ☐ Says "Someone will be with you in a minute." *If able to fully service request:* ☐ Keeps customer informed of search progress. ☐ Teaches the customer where possible. ☐ Walks them to the section: stacks, restroom, computer, etc. *If handing off to appropriate staff:* ☐ Makes the transition smooth. ☐ Walks the customer to the appropriate staff person. ☐ Introduces staff to patron. ☐ Explains customer's needs before handing off. ☐ Asks "Have I completely answered your question?"	Do not point! Always walk the customer to the right desk or section. An exception is if you have a huge line. In that case, give them clear instructions and then the moment you are free, track them down to see if they've found what they're looking for. -Be respectful of different ages, cultures, demographic backgrounds, etc. -Be patient: Not everyone has had the same exposure to technology and education that we have, and everyone deserves to be treated equally and with respect. Don't be condescending or impatient. -Involve the customer: Show them how to do what you're doing, or at the very least show them your screen. Talk them through the steps as you're doing them so the silence and waiting don't add to the barrier.
Step 4: Thanking the Customer ☐ Promotes branch's designated service or promotion, tailored to the transaction. ☐ Thanks patron for coming in and invites them back.	-Never let them leave with just one thing—you can increase your circ stats as well as improve your customer service by recommending additional items, known as "building the basket." Even offering eBooks or a program they're interested in is a way of "selling" and inviting them back. -Use the customer's name when possible. "Thank you, Mrs. Smith, come back and see us soon."

Customer Service & Peer Observation
February—May, 2017

What is peer observation?
Peer observation is the act of your peers, in this case your branch's Customer Service Team Builders (CSTBs) and Temporary Deputies, observing your patron interactions to note whether or not they observed you perform PWPLS's specific customer service behaviors. **This will work exactly like the first round that took place in summer 2016.**

Why am I being observed?
To get an overall picture of how PWPLS is doing with its new customer service model. Responses will be recorded anonymously to paint a system-wide picture of our strengths and weaknesses and determine where additional training is needed as a system.

When will I be observed?
You will be observed twice for ten minutes each time between February 1 and May 30, 2017.

What should I expect?
- Your CSTB will have a copy of the observation checklist in hand. They will observe your patron interactions for ten minutes twice (over the course of the evaluation period).
- Your CSTB will write down what they see you do and check the observed behaviors. They will not judge or say "good job" or "bad job." They are simply like a mirror that will help you improve by showing you exactly what you do—this is called neutral feedback*.

What happens afterward?
- You will receive your observation handout to keep.
- Your response will be anonymously recorded into a system-wide database that will be analyzed as a whole without names.
- The CSTBs will meet in June to determine the next steps.

If you have questions, please ask your branch's Customer Service Team Builders.

*Neutral feedback is a way of helping someone change his or her behavior by providing information about it. It is not a judgment and there are no values placed on the behavior being observed. The purpose is to help one "see" his or her behavior as others see it and help one to better achieve his or her goals. Neutral feedback is descriptive, not evaluative, describes specific actions, and is directed toward modifiable behavior. Examples include "I saw you smile" or "I didn't hear you give a friendly verbal greeting." No judgment, just observation.

Prince William Public Library System
A World of Information
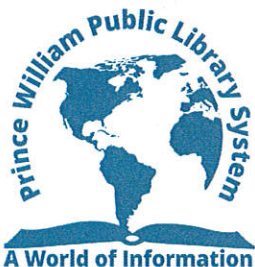
The PWPLS customer service philosophy:
We treat every customer as if it's their first time.

Receiving Feedback

1. Make a sincere effort not to be defensive.
Evaluate and try to understand what is being said with an open mind.

2. Seek to find examples yourself of the behavior that is being discussed.
"Remember when I did _____? Is that the kind of thing you're talking about?"

3. Summarize, in your own words, what you understand the feedback to be.
Check for misunderstandings; be clear about what you are learning about yourself.

4. Share some of your feelings about the feedback you have received (but be alert to the risk of defensiveness).
This will help you understand your behavior better, and make it easier for others to be more accepting of that behavior in the future.

5. It remains your right to evaluate the feedback, determine what you believe of it, and decide in which ways, if any, it is worth your while to make personal changes.