



FOLLOW-UP REVIEW • REPORT NUMBER 23-17 • APRIL 2026

Customer Service

Agencies reviewed have implemented most recommendations that improve customer service

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Why we did this review

This follow-up review was conducted to determine the extent to which the six state agencies sampled addressed recommendations from our June 2024 performance audit (Report #23-17).

The performance audit examined selected methods of customer service. Specifically, the report focused on call centers, with limited review of agency chatbots, email, and websites. The audit also reviewed whether the state's central customer service center and selected state agencies effectively addressed citizen inquiries. Agencies reviewed included the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA), the Office of Secretary of State (SOS), and the Departments of Drivers Services (DDS), Human Services (DHS), Natural Resources (DNR), and Revenue (DOR).

About Customer Service

The state has a central customer service call center operated by the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA). If GTA cannot fully address a customer question, it will transfer the customer to the appropriate agency. Large state agencies frequently have their own call centers, some of which handle more than one million calls a year.

Agencies may also respond to customer inquiries made via email, and agencies use chatbots that provide immediate responses without requiring the involvement of agency staff.

Customer Service

Agencies reviewed have implemented most recommendations that improve customer service

What we found

While the original audit reviewed six state agencies, it included recommendations related to call center operations, digital service tools, and customer service practices applicable to all state agencies with significant public interaction. The reviewed agencies had many of the recommended practices in place at the time of the audit; however, following the release of our report additional steps were taken as needed to update procedures, modify systems, or expand service options.

Call Center Operations

The original audit found that call center performance varied across agencies and that some agencies lacked consistent goals, metrics, and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system practices. GTA and DDS generally met their performance targets, but other agencies missed targets because of long wait times, high rates of disconnections, and high rates of abandoned calls often attributed to call volume. Agencies with outsourced call centers also did not meet the performance standards in their contracts.

Since the audit, agencies reported improved call center operations by maintaining or revising performance goals, tracking key call center metrics, and updating IVR functions. Most agencies already had performance goals in place, but others—such as DOR—established new division-level goals based on call volume and staffing. Agencies continued practices such as monitoring call reject and abandonment rates, reviewing average speed of answer and handle time, and using consistent indicators across all call centers. DNR, the only agency with outsourced call center operations, updated service requirements with one of its contractors and began meeting with the contractor regularly to review performance data.

Staffing Levels and Service Capacity

The original audit found that call center performance was affected by staffing levels and the availability of alternative service methods. Most agencies offered some form of self-service, which

reduced the number of callers who would need to speak with an agent. Agencies without self-service functions, such as SOS, experienced lower call center performance (e.g., long wait times, high rate of disconnections). Agencies used various strategies to address staffing needs; these included temporary-to-permanent hiring, advancement opportunities, and remote-work options.

Since the audit, agencies have continued to monitor staffing needs and have implemented strategies to manage high call volumes and service capacity. Some agencies have adjusted call center operating hours and modified the mix of full- and part-time staff to address the workload. Agencies have also implemented additional self-service features to support periods of higher demand. Specifically, DDS continued enhancing its chatbot, and SOS updated its IVR to route callers to new self-service tools during periods of increased call volume.

Expanding Digital Self-Service Tools

The original audit found that chatbots provided faster responses, but their accuracy varied and written inquiries generally produced more reliable results. Written inquiries via web forms or emails to agency staff were answered correctly but took longer to process.

Since the audit, most agencies have maintained or enhanced chatbots and IVR self-service features. Agencies with existing chatbots continued using them, while others piloted or evaluated new options. DOR tested an internal chatbot to support call center staff and will consider a customer-facing version after implementation. SOS and DNR continued evaluating or implementing chatbot features for future use.

Agencies also continued improving web-based features, including application tracking tools and password reset functions, to provide additional avenues for users to access information without contacting call centers.

Agency Response: *The agencies generally agreed with the content and current status as stated in the report.*

The following table summarizes the findings and recommendations in our 2024 report and actions taken to address them. A copy of the 2024 performance audit report (#23-27) may be accessed at [Customer Service Performance Audit Report](#).

Recommendations and Action Taken

Status: 5 Findings

Substantially Addressed: 4 Partially Addressed: 1 Not Addressed: 0 No Recommendations: 0

Finding 1: Call center performance varied among state agencies reviewed, with some agencies unable to serve callers during high volume periods

Substantially Addressed: All state agencies have performance goals and track relevant metrics for their call centers, including for outsourced operations.

Original Recommendations	Action Taken
1.1 Agencies should establish performance goals for their call centers.	Fully Implemented – At the time of the original audit, GTA, DDS, DHS, and SOS already had performance goals in place for their call centers. In July 2024, DOR established performance goals for each of its five divisions based on call volume trends, staffing levels, and service expectations. Since the audit, DHS’s two call centers have adopted the same platform and key indicators.
1.2 Agencies should track call reject rates, abandonment rates, average speed of answer, and average handle time to allow management to diagnose potential problem areas impacting overall customer satisfaction.	Fully Implemented – At the time of the original audit, all reviewed agencies had the identified metrics in place.
1.3 If an agency outsources call center services, it should include performance goals and required metric reporting in the contract.	Fully Implemented – DNR was the only reviewed agency that outsourced call center operations—for State Parks and Historic Sites Division and Wildlife Resource Division (WRD). Both contracts had performance goals at the time of the audit. Since the audit, WRD revised its goals with its contractor and now meets with the contractor biweekly to review call center performance data.

Finding 2: Agencies use call center technology with mixed success to improve customer service.

Substantially Addressed: Agencies either maintained or implemented IVR practices to prevent unnecessary disconnects, evaluate system functionality, use call-back features when appropriate, and expand self-service options during high call volumes.

Original Recommendations	Action Taken
<p>2.1 Agency IVRs should not disconnect callers who make an incorrect selection from the menu but instead place them into a predetermined queue.</p>	<p>Fully Implemented – At the time of the original audit, all reviewed agencies except DHS had IVR practices that did not disconnect callers. In July 2024, DHS completed an IVR change to avoid disconnects after authentication, and clients may now re-enter authentication information or request an agent.</p>
<p>2.2 Agencies should have established procedures to consistently evaluate the functionality of their IVR systems, especially when changes to the menu have been made or when the system has reached maximum capacity for certain queues.</p>	<p>Fully Implemented – At the time of the original audit, all agencies except DHS had established procedures for evaluating their IVR systems. DHS reported that the agency now completes a daily check of the IVR systems and tests for technical failures and performance issues.</p>
<p>2.3 Agencies that experience issues with abandonment and long wait times for customers should use courtesy call back functionality.</p>	<p>Partially Implemented – At the time of the original audit, four of the six agencies used a courtesy call back function for some of their call centers. GTA did not have courtesy callback functionality because its performance did not necessitate the feature, while DDS had no courtesy callback despite long call wait times. Prior to the audit, DDS had call back functionality, but it was discontinued due to insufficient staffing to address the volume. After the audit, DDS requested additional funding for staffing. Funding was instead provided to improve the agency’s chatbot functionality in an attempt to reduce call volume.</p>
<p>2.4 Agencies that experience issues with especially high call volumes should evaluate the use of self-service options for callers.</p>	<p>Fully Implemented – At the time of the original audit, GTA, DNR, DHS, and DNR used self-service options for callers. Since the audit, SOS has updated its IVR to route customers to self-service options during periods of high call volume. SOS also added an application tracker to its website and the ability to request a login pin so clients can view their application status without having to call. As noted above, DDS has received additional funding to improve its chatbot functionality.</p>

Finding 3: Call center performance is impacted by staffing levels.

Substantially Addressed: Agencies continued to assess staffing levels and explore alternative methods to manage call volume, with some expanding hours or adjusting staffing models to improve service.

Original Recommendations	Action Taken
3.1 Agencies should continuously assess whether they have sufficient staffing levels to meet desired customer service levels and agency performance goals.	Fully Implemented – At the time of the original audit, all agencies reviewed continuously assessed staffing levels. Since the audit, SOS has expanded call center hours and staffing to improve performance. Call center hours were extended from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.-6:30 a.m. SOS also increased the number of staff, hiring part-time virtual call representatives to cover overload.
3.2 Agencies should continually assess which other methods, such as chatbots, can reduce the need for additional staffing.	Fully Implemented – At the time of the original audit, all agencies were reviewing other methods to offset the need for additional staffing. As previously noted, DDS received funding for enhancing its chatbot in lieu of funding for staff.

Finding 4: While agency chatbots deliver information faster, emails and web forms yield more accurate results.

Partially Addressed: Agencies continued using or developing chatbot tools and written-inquiry controls, while others continued piloting or evaluating solutions to improve accuracy and response times.

Original Recommendations	Action Taken
4.1 Agencies that experience high call volumes should provide a chatbot as a self-service tool for constituent service.	Partially Implemented – At the time of the original audit, GTA, DDS, and DHS already provided clients with a chatbot. DOR is currently piloting an internal-use chatbot that helps call center staff respond to constituent inquiries using knowledge-based documentation. After completing internal testing and implementation, the agency will evaluate options for deploying a customer-facing solution. SOS is continuing to evaluate options for a chatbot feature, while DNR's Wildlife Resources Division is working with a contractor to implement a chatbot feature on its website.

Original Recommendations	Action Taken
4.2 Agencies with a chatbot should use data collected from chatbots (e.g., common topics) to build chatbot knowledge and ensure more accurate information is provided.	Partially Implemented – At the time of the performance audit, GTA, DDS, and DHS had methods in place to improve chatbot knowledge. DOR is using data collected during the chatbot pilot to strengthen its knowledge-based documentation and improve response accuracy. The other two agencies reviewed did not have chatbots.
4.3 Agencies should establish controls to ensure all written inquiries are accurately responded to in a time frame that aligns with expected agency performance.	Partially Implemented – At the time of the performance audit, GTA, DDS, DOR, and SOS had established controls for timely response to written inquiries. DHS has not drafted written guidelines since the audit, but it stated that expectations for a 3-5 business day response are communicated to employees. DNR’s State Parks and Historic Sites Division stated it will provide clients with an acknowledgement of the written message that indicates query responses will be provided within 1-2 business days. The DNR’s Wildlife Resources Division did not note any changes.

Finding 5: Most reviewed agencies’ websites perform above the state’s desired goal.

Substantially Addressed: Agencies continued routine evaluations of website quality, accessibility, and search optimization.

Original Recommendations	Action Taken
5.1 Agencies should regularly evaluate website quality, accessibility, and search engine optimization through participation or through the procurement of a similar service.	Fully Implemented – At the time of the original audit, all agencies reviewed regularly evaluated website quality and engine optimization either through participation or procurement of service.

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