



# The Abu Dhabi Program for **Effortless Customer Experience**

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# The Case for CX in the Public Sector

The **customer experience (CX)** landscape has been extensively explored by private organisations, harbouring a treasure trove of insights on the real-world implementation of successful CX practices. Leveraging targeted **customer-centric** principles has proven a potent driver of key organisational objectives; significantly improving customer satisfaction, lowering operational costs, and raising revenues in the private sector.

Over the past decade, the compelling business case for CX has inspired public sector thought leaders to champion its implementation. The pertinence of CX in government is reinforced by the unique conditions characterising public-sector service delivery:



## **Government as the sole service provider:**

There are no alternatives to public-sector services, heightening the risk of complacency and underscoring the necessity for high-quality delivery.



## **Delivering services to diverse demographics:**

Delivering services to diverse demographics: The government has the unique task of delivering accessible services to all demographic groups, requiring a human-centred approach that ensures comprehensive understanding of their individual needs.



## **Addressing complex social problems:**

CX interventions address complex social problems with multiple causes and are therefore a powerful tool in the policymaker's toolkit.

Government agencies offering better customer experiences see measurable positive impacts, including increased customer trust, fewer support requests, improved customer satisfaction, improved perceptions of mission success, and overall better organisational health.

Upon inspection, the program has five strategic thrusts to focus on (1) the development of a formal **CX policy and guide**, (2) yearly **priority setting** of services for targeting pioneering transformation results, (3) **capability building** through the assessment and training of customer service staff based on a validated competency framework, (4) setting up and operating a bespoke **design lab** to address priority services, and (5) **measurement** initiatives to quantify service improvement and identify strengths and areas for attention.

These efforts were based on a pioneering model that adopts a holistic and collaborative approach to look at the entire customer experience journey across four dimensions: **CX direction, design, development, and delivery**. The model was developed in collaboration with the International Foundation for Customer Experience in Government .

Improving the customer experience in the public sector is emerging as a transformative new approach for addressing state objectives and complex state challenges. Tapping into the largely unexplored potential of CX in the public sector is a novel, creative, and potent way to elevate the performance of government entities and countries at large.

# About the Program

The Abu Dhabi Program for Effortless Customer Experience was launched in March 2022. The program creates a conducive ecosystem around customer experience to support the delivery of world-class services.

Effortlessness has emerged as a measure of increasing importance in the government sector; expressing both perceived, self-rated effort by the customer in availing a service, as well as calculated effort quantified through: (1) **service speed**, (2) **service ease of use** represented by the number of steps and number of documents (3) **ease of access**, and (4) **staff professionalism**.

The program is built on two key principles: maximizing opportunities for self-service and providing strong customer support:






## Customer Empowerment:

customers are encouraged to avail the service independently by reducing the need to communicate with or visit the entity directly.

## Customer Support:

in the event a customer is required to communicate with the entity or faces challenges, they receive full support by well-trained and professional staff.

To achieve an effortless customer experience, it is necessary to remove any challenges and barriers that the customer may face to obtain the service, ensuring simplicity and ease of process. The program is divided into 5 strategic thrusts, currently underway:

-  **Customer experience policy and guide:** A CX policy was developed to clearly define the roles of all stakeholders involved in the effective management and seamless delivery of the program. The policy also focused on raising awareness and driving successful adoption through comprehensive guidelines and tools, targeted training on the policy and playbook, and the creation of a network and incentive scheme for CX and design professionals.
-  **Priority setting:** A service catalogue outlines the full scope of public services in Abu Dhabi, including digital and non-digital channels. A common methodology has been established for setting agendas for high priority services.
-  **Design lab:** Abu Dhabi follows a holistic design methodology, with service design activities centralised in a bespoke design hub.
-  **Capability building:** The professionalism of Customer Service representatives has been quantified through the development of a first of its kind, contextually tailored competency framework and assessment. Over 6,000 Customer Service representatives were assessed using the framework, collectively generating an overall staff professionalism index.
-  **Measuring customer experience performance:** The CX Effortless Index has been developed as a comprehensive measurement metric quantifying CX practices in a single number.

"On a Mission to Transform the Public Sector One Customer Experience at a Time." International Foundation for Customer Experience in Government, 6 July 2022, <https://govcx.org/>.

The International Foundation for Customer Experience in Government is a non-profit organisation headquartered in Canada, responsible for advancing the body of CX knowledge and practice. Supported by a consortium of CX thought leaders around the world it developed the first International Model for Customer Experience in Government, benchmarked against 80 best practices across 20 countries.

# Program Pilot

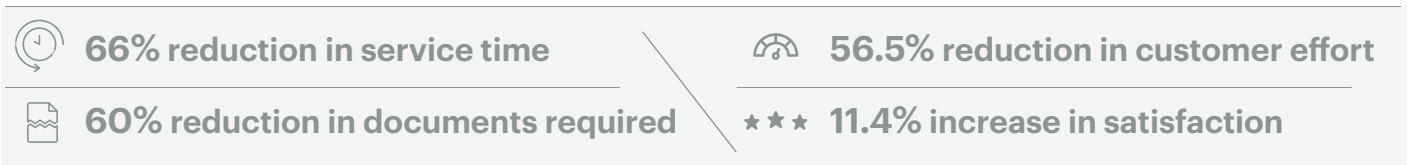
The Abu Dhabi Program for Effortless Customer Experience was validated through an initial pilot program with three major government entities. Each demonstrated marked improvements in key performance indicators of service delivery, streamlining customer experiences, largely by enabling quicker completion times and fewer touchpoints.

## Department of Municipalities and Transport

**Entity Role:** Responsible for the urban development and growth of Abu Dhabi through the regulation and monitoring of municipal services.

**Service:** The Department of Municipalities and Transport’s (DMT) service transformation was for the “Request for Parking Permit” service.

**Initiative:** Leveraging on internal and external system integration, DMT linked customers to pre-entered vehicle and property information to reduce the number of service steps and required documents.

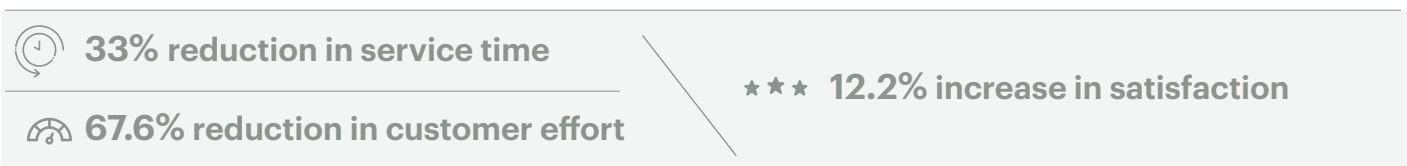


## Department of Community Development

**Entity Role:** Responsible for promoting an inclusive and sustainable society , responsive to the needs of all members of the community.

**Service:** The Department of Community Development’s (DCD) service transformation was for the “Request for Social Support” service.

**Initiative:** DCD focused on customers’ understanding of policies and service information and introduced an e-wallet for obtaining rapid social support, decreasing customer effort, and achieving promising satisfaction metrics.



## Department of Economic Development

**Entity Role:** Responsible for regulating the business sector and key economic activities through data-driven approaches to promote sustainable and diversified economic growth.

**Service:** The Department of Economic Development’s (DED) service transformation was for the “Economic Name Reservation” service.

**Initiative:** DED introduced a smart search tool and provided customers with a selection of pre-approved economic names, decreasing number of returned applications and incidents of service failure.



# Maturity Assessment

After the pilot program, an international panel of CX assessors carried out a comprehensive evaluation to determine each Abu Dhabi government entity's maturity level in terms of customer experience delivery. The assessment was designed to gauge how advanced each entity is in providing seamless, customer-centric services and followed these stages:

## Internal Assessment

Assembling an internal assessment team in each entity consisting of 2-4 assessors in addition to a senior assessor. Assessors complete the assessment individually and then agree on a consensus score; submitting to the senior assessor who then sets a target based on the current level of CX maturity.

## External Validation

A team of external assessors review the results and evidence provided by the internal assessment team, validate conclusions, and amend results if required.

## Action Planning

Based on the outcome of the internal assessment and external validation process, entities develop an action plan detailing the initiatives needed to achieve the maturity target.

# Program Rollout

The quantitative success and positive experiential transformation achieved through the pilot initiative established a strong evidence base to propel the program forward in a government-wide roll-out. The first wave of service improvement was launched on the 25th of July 2022, within the following streams:

**Minilabs:** Focused on improving individual services. A total of twenty two services were included in the first wave of minilabs.

**Bootcamps:** Focused on improving bundles of services related to a memorable life moment which involves a salient event in a customer's life, often requiring them to access several services through multiple entities. A total of four life moments were included in the first wave of bootcamps, including: starting a family, starting a business, moving to Abu Dhabi, and losing a loved one.

Entities were given an ambitious target of developing and launching their proposed service improvements within 100 days after all design team members signed off an official action plan. The initiative has generated several standout cases combining innovative ideas with seamless design; generating remarkable service improvement outcomes for the customer, entity, employees, and society at large.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Economic Development, [www.added.gov.ae/en](http://www.added.gov.ae/en). Accessed 27 Jan. 2024.

Thaler, Richard H., and Cass R. Sunstein. Nudge. Yale University Press, 2008.

Sunstein, Cass R. Sludge: What Stops Us from Getting Things Done and What to Do about It. The MIT Press, 2022.

# The Way Ahead

The Abu Dhabi Program for Effortless Customer Experience is a culmination of the emirate's longstanding commitment to putting people at the heart of everything it does.

**“Future solutions should allow us to be closer to the customer through a quicker feedback loop, offering customised support to different segments.** - Her Excellency Sara Awadh Musallam, Abu Dhabi Executive Council member and Chairperson of Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge.

The launch of the program was an extension of this ambition, enabling customers to carry out their day-to-day tasks seamlessly, conveniently, and effortlessly.

Customer experience is the cornerstone of our future approach to service delivery with the Effortless program successfully laying the groundwork for a strategic roadmap to enhance every interaction with government services. Building on past successes, an innovative CX strategy will be introduced, with a bold vision of positioning Abu Dhabi as a global benchmark for customer experience.

**“We are confident that CX will play an integral role in enhancing the customer experience across organisations in Abu Dhabi. It's crucial to cultivate a mindset that prioritises placing the customer at the center of everything we do, collectively adopted through a unified agenda.”** - His Excellency Mansoor Ibrahim Al Mansoori, Abu Dhabi Executive Council member and Chairman of the Department of Health.

In an ambitious plan, the program is designed to raise the maturity level of government services by 50% while achieving efficiency savings of 200 million dirhams.

The new strategy defines exceptional services through the following principles: “We are close to the people”, “We are well-informed”, and “We are trendsetting”. Firstly, it prioritizes a deep connection with the customers served, fostering trust and empathy while understanding their needs.

**“Abu Dhabi embraces a strategy centered on serving the community and valuing the voice of every individual. Making life easier and simplifying processes is our top priority. As partners in progress, we keep meeting with community members to include them in this outstanding effort, which aims to continuously improve customer experiences and enhance their quality of life.”** – His Excellency Dr Mugheer Khamis Al Khaili, Abu Dhabi Executive Council member and Chairman of the Department of Community Development in Abu Dhabi.

## Way Ahead for the Abu Dhabi Effortless Program

Anchored by five fundamental principles—Priorities of the Public, OSS Model, Value Maximization, Balanced Measurement, and Connecting with the Future—the program envisions a transformative journey ahead. Success hinges on the successful implementation of a newly formulated CX strategy for Abu Dhabi, with 11 key strategic initiatives, including the following key examples, these include:

- **CX Think Tank:** A hub for CX innovation and experimentation.
- **CX Forum:** An annual platform to advance public-sector CX globally.
- **CX Award:** Awards for best entity, best life moment and best service.
- **CX Spaces:** Active and ongoing engagement with all customer segments.
- **CX Powered by AI:** Focused on technologies aiming to enhance public services and streamline process.
- **CX Diploma:** CX agents, service designers, and technologists training and distribution of official certification documents.

As Abu Dhabi moves into the next phase of its journey to deliver the best possible customer experience journey, this strategic roadmap envisions a future where seamless interactions, efficiency, innovation, and empowerment become the standard. It not only formalizes the development of world-class services but also sets a new benchmark, inspiring a future in which customer experiences exceed expectations and shape service excellence on a global scale.

**“The Abu Dhabi Program for Effortless Customer Experience is renewing our approach to service transformation. We now adopt a human-centered design approach, enabling collaborative efforts with all stakeholders and ensuring the inclusion of affected segments within the public.”**- His Excellency Dr Ahmed Tamim Hisham Al Kuttub, Abu Dhabi Executive Council member and Chairman of the Department of Government Enablement.



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