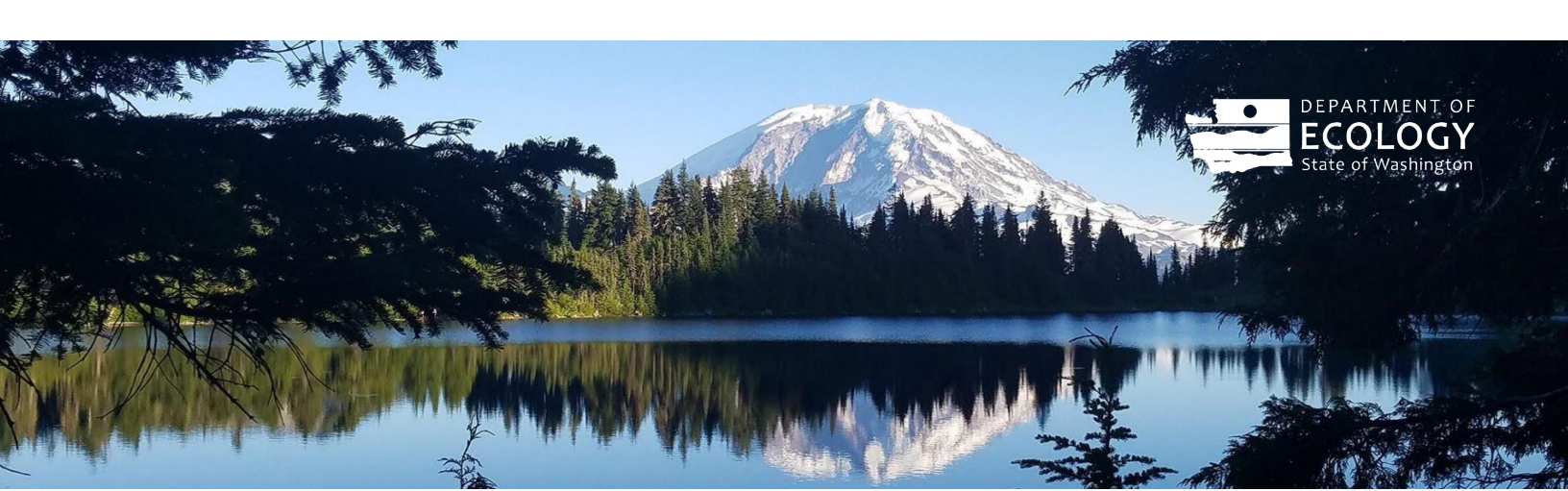




Customer Experience (CX) Improvement Plan

Department of Ecology
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Section A: Agency-Wide CX Strategy

A1. Executive summary of Ecology's CX vision

Ecology centers the customer experience (CX) in how we design our programs and provide our services, and is committed to improving CX for all who engage with our agency. Providing clear, consistent, and transparent services is central to carrying out our mission to protect, preserve, and enhance Washington's environment for current and future generations. Every interaction — whether through regulation and enforcement, administering grants and loans funding, providing technical assistance, or engaging with communities — should be clear, responsive, respectful, and accessible.

As a regulatory agency, we are responsible for protecting the environment and public health through activities such as environmental permitting, compliance oversight, and technical assistance. Exceptional customer service is a key element of what makes this work effective and successful. Ecology is committed to conducting our work with respect and care, delivering timely answers and results, understanding our customers' needs, and being responsive to customer feedback. Our customer service policy reinforces these principles and ensures agency programs and offices continue to apply them in their work and engagement (further detailed in Section C1).

Ecology seeks feedback and input on major projects, policies, and processes to better understand our customers' needs, values, and the potential impacts of our work and decisions. Engagement takes many forms, including listening sessions, public forums, stakeholder meetings, technical workgroups, and government-to-government consultation with Tribes. Our long-standing administration of the Regulated Customer Survey — which we've used to gather feedback from credentialed and inspected customers for more than twenty years — further demonstrates our commitment to actively using customer input to inform continuous improvement in our processes (further detailed in Section A3).

Ecology uses many best practices to strengthen and enhance CX. Our implementation of general permits and orders reduces administrative burden on applicants by enabling automatic approvals and renewals when eligibility criteria are met — increasing processing efficiency and allowing customers to continue their operations without interruption. During program development, Ecology engages with impacted customers to mitigate impacts, provide regulatory flexibility where appropriate, offer alternative timelines, and tailor fees or requirements based on different factors, such as business size or activity type. We remain committed to providing technical assistance, tools, and resources to support easier participation and compliance while advancing environmental protection.

Ecology has launched multiple large-scale improvements to modernize our systems and processes, increase efficiency, and strengthen CX agency-wide, with the overall goal of laying a strong foundation that remains flexible, accountable, and user-friendly over time. These efforts advance Goal 1 of our Agency Strategic Plan: to support and engage our communities, customers, and employees. Current and planned efforts are intentionally designed to further improve the access to, effectiveness, and timeliness of our information, engagement, and services. This includes modernizing existing systems and infrastructure to leverage available technologies, expanding accountability and feedback tools to further support customer experience, enhancing Tribal engagement and consultation, advancing environmental justice, strengthening language access practices, and embedding continuous improvement into our processes.

While Ecology has not always operated under a unified, agency-wide CX strategy, alignment with Executive Order 25-06 provides an opportunity to formalize and strengthen our approach, building greater clarity and standardization across our services. Ecology's continued focus on CX is integral as we implement major strategic and operational initiatives. Leadership is committed to championing these efforts and aligning CX with our values — clear communication, transparency, accountability, inclusion, and public service — to build trust and deliver effective environmental protection for all Washingtonians.

A2. Strategic context for CX improvements

Ecology's mission is to protect, preserve, and enhance Washington's environment for current and future generations. A clear, consistent, and transparent customer experience is central to how we will carry out our mission. As a result of the implementation of this CX Improvement Plan, Ecology will update our Agency Strategic Plan to incorporate our CX strategies and strengthen alignment between our mission, services, and the customers we serve.

The scope of Ecology's work and services is expansive, reflected by our vision to protect and sustain healthy land, air, water, and climate in harmony with a strong economy. Our programs and regulatory functions include:

- Permitting, licensing, and other credentialing
- Regulatory compliance monitoring and enforcement
- Coordinating programs that support environmental conservation, restoration, and remediation
- Conducting scientific research and environmental monitoring, and sharing data and findings
- Providing funding for individual, local, and statewide environmental projects through grants, loans, and contracts

The customers we serve, and their needs, are equally expansive. We consider our customers to be any person, community, business, or organization that engages with Ecology's programs, receives our service, or is affected by our work. The key populations we serve include individuals, local communities and organizations, small-to-large businesses, local to international industries, the Washington Legislature, and more. We recognize there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach for our work, services, and customers.

Customer feedback

We are using customer feedback gathered through existing engagement tools and feedback mechanisms to inform us of our priority improvements in the near term and expanding our capacity to measure CX agencywide to further inform process improvements in the long term (further detailed in Section A3).

Service equity considerations

We recognize small businesses, Tribes, people with disabilities (about 25% of Washington's population), and multilingual communities (about 10%) often face disproportionate administrative and financial burdens, greater procedural uncertainty, and less favorable outcomes when interacting with both private industry and government agencies.

These disparities in experience are structural, not individual, and Ecology strives to address them at the structural level. We're focusing on reducing barriers and improving access by:

- Simplifying processes.
- Using plain language in our communication.
- Strengthening language access.
- Ensuring a baseline of accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Providing reasonable accommodations as needed.

Ecology is committed to embedding equity into the systems our customers use and operates under clear state and federal mandates to do so. Continuing to design our processes for accessibility and inclusion increases equity, strengthens engagement, supports compliance with state and federal requirements, and advances our shared goal of better environmental outcomes for a safer and healthier Washington.

Agency CX element focus

Out of the five CX elements Your Washington identified – Focus, Processes, Data & Metrics, Technology, or Customer Engagement – we are currently focusing on technology as our agency CX element. Improving our technology systems to bridge gaps and apply Agile strategies enables more collaborative, iterative approaches to refining our processes for both employees and customers. This approach supports more flexible, responsive, and accessible service delivery. As part of this effort, we are taking steps to strengthen our technology systems, processes, and resources to support a more consistent, streamlined, and connected service delivery across our programs.

Key service selection

The key services we identified to make targeted CX improvements to, with consideration of existing resources, are processes or tools:

- With a large volume of customers
- Where improvements were known to be needed or beneficial to improve the customer experience
- That will expand on improvement projects of strategic importance

A3. Measuring CX at the agency level

Current efforts to measure CX

One of Ecology's largest customer feedback mechanisms is the Regulated Customer Survey. For over twenty years, Ecology has gathered input from customers who apply for credentials or receive inspections. We conduct the survey every six months through a third-party contractor. Results are reviewed and analyzed with executive and program leadership to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. In 2023, environmental programs identified two to three focus areas where their respective results were trending below the agency's 85% target. Programs applied a continuous improvement framework to conduct root-cause analyses, identify and test targeted improvements, and continue to assess the effectiveness of those changes over time and adjust approach or strategy, as necessary. Progress and outcomes related to focus areas are reported to leadership every six months. The Regulated Customer Survey helps measure a significant portion of the customer experience at the agency level, particularly for permitting, enforcement, and compliance services.

Ecology gathers input from customers and stakeholders across numerous projects and initiatives using a variety of engagement methods. These include surveys, public forums and meetings, tabling at community events, and formal public comment periods. Most of these efforts are project-specific, though some occur iteratively, in contrast to the recurring Regulated Customer Survey.

Ecology will continue to seek out input through multiple channels and use the feedback received to inform and improve agency processes and services.

Expanded efforts to measure CX

Ecology is expanding how we measure customer experience across the agency. The following agency roles, in collaboration with other agency subject matter experts, will lead and advise on these efforts:

- Customer Feedback Lead
- Digital Accessibility Lead
- Language Access Coordinator
- Environmental Justice Engagement Lead

We are currently exploring how to use existing resources and technology to measure customer experience, as resource availability will likely impact the scope and expansion of this work and associated timelines. We want to be able to understand feedback at both a project level and be able to combine results to understand overall customer experience at the agency level. We will focus on measuring whether customers' overall experience and satisfaction are improving and use their feedback to inform where improvements may be needed. This will include measuring areas like our customers' trust, their ease and success of using our services, and the clarity of information and guidance they receive.

Quality feedback design ensures the information we receive from our customers is actionable, standardized as much as possible to truly gauge CX at an agency level, but also tailored to the unique aspects of our expansive services where possible. Our initial plan is to pilot test a feedback collection tool on select processes and web pages, then expand the tool to more processes and web pages upon successful testing and establishment of a sustainable infrastructure.

Section B: Key Services CX Improvements

B1. Planned CX improvements by key service

Key Service #1: Application status updates

Description: Individuals, businesses, local governments, non-profits and others apply for thousands of permits, licenses, and other credentials from Ecology every year. This new application status tracking tool will enable customers to check the status of their applications and view updates.

Improvement 1.1: Provide an online interface for applicants to find out where their application is in the review process (for processes that don't currently offer this).

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Customer input that informed this improvement selection	Survey open-ended responses from the Regulated Customer Survey. Some open-ended responses have signaled customer dissatisfaction with not knowing where their applications were in the process and having to contact Ecology directly to get a status update.
Why this matters to customers	Transparency, clarity, and responsive communications. Customers want to know and understand where their application is in the review process.

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Equity considerations	Some customers may not have reliable access to a computer or internet, if at all. We offer the options to call a representative, email, or send written mail to request a status update on their application. We will also include information about how to contact an interpreter if assistance is needed in a language other than English.
Timeframe	• June 2026 – December 2026: Pilot (1-5 credentials) • January 2027 – June 2027: Check and adjust based on pilot • July 2027 – Ongoing: Include additional credentials
Success metrics	Ecology plans to pilot test this new tool and identify associated success metrics in the second half of 2026. Success metrics will focus on ease of use, ability to find application status, and clarity of information presented.
Agency or external partners	• IT staff • Environmental program subject matter experts (SMEs)

Table 1. Key Service #1, Improvement 1.1

Key Service #2: Biblio

Description: Biblio is an online resource database that provides public access to Ecology publications, forms, and guidance documents, allowing users to search for and retrieve information relevant to programs, regulations, and agency services.

Improvement 2.1: Redesign the Biblio application, including a modernized user interface to enhance the search experience, bookmarking, and labelling of publications.

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Customer input that informed this improvement selection	Customer feedback and helpdesk interactions. Customers reported difficulty finding the publications they were searching for, and search results often returned “historical” documents that were not available online, which appeared to users as broken links.
Why this matters to customers	Customers need to be able to find the publications they’re looking for with confidence and ease. Translated and updated document versions existed but were not clearly linked for customers to identify and access, and the search interface was only available in English. A modern, intuitive interface clarifies document availability, displays related publications (e.g., translated or updated versions of the same document, or other documents in the same series) and improves accessibility for all users. Customers who use assistive technologies, such as screen readers, may not be able to confirm a document meets accessibility standards and will be navigable and usable. Clear labeling of accessibility status and contact information to report accessibility issues will better ensure customers with disabilities have equitable access to our publications, information, and associated services.
Equity considerations	Improving the ease of successfully finding documents most impacts members of the public and community organizations, particularly non-English speakers. An English-only search interface and unclear links between original, translated, and updated documents

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
	creates access barriers. Improving search clarity and language access helps reduce these disparities and improves equitable access to environmental information.
Timeframe	November 2025 – August 2026
Success metrics	• Successful search rate (users finding a document without multiple searches) • Number of Helpdesk requests related to locating documents • User satisfaction rates with ease of use, navigation, and clarity of information (Feedback mechanism will gather feedback from customers and employees, and will be developed alongside efforts to measure CX at the agency level)
Agency or external partners	• Publications coordinators • Agency librarian • Internal IT and application support teams • Environmental program staff • Communications and accessibility specialists

Table 2. Key Service #2, Improvement 2.1

Improvement 2.2: Automate backend processing, metadata validation, and early error detection.

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Customer input that informed this improvement selection	Customer feedback; Helpdesk interactions; Direct interviews with agency publications coordinators.
Why this matters to customers	Customers experienced delays in accessing environmental research and confusion caused by outdated, duplicate, or incorrectly labeled documents appearing in search results. Improved automation and backend visibility will reduce publishing errors, ensure current and translated versions are clearly identified, and make resources available to the public more quickly and reliably. Ecology employees currently don't have tools to evaluate and prioritize the backlog of inaccessible publications. Improved backend visibility within the redesigned Biblio application will help environmental program staff identify which publications are noncompliant with accessibility standards and provide customer usage data. This will aid in Ecology's ability to prioritize document remediation to bring the most critical documents into compliance first and plan which publications to address next.
Equity considerations	Clearer versioning and automated handling of translations helps reduce confusion and better provide equitable access to our publications and information.
Timeframe	November 2025 – August 2026

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Success metrics	• Number of Helpdesk requests related to missing, outdated, or mislabeled documents • Further CX metrics will be explored and identified once the new Biblio application is launched
Agency or external partners	• Publications coordinators • Agency librarian • Internal IT and application support teams • Environmental program staff • Communications and accessibility specialists

Table 3. Key Service #2, Improvement 2.2

Key Service #3: Construction Stormwater General Permit

Description: The Construction Stormwater General Permit is one of Ecology’s most widely used. It is required for many construction projects across the state where stormwater runoff from construction-related activities could leave a site and affect nearby surface or groundwater. Contractors, developers, consultants, local governments, Tribes, and private property owners apply for coverage under the general permit to receive authorization to discharge stormwater from these activities.

Improvement 3.1: Improve and expand application processing data to increase transparency and meet decision deadlines.

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Customer input that informed this improvement selection	Survey data
Why this matters to customers	Customers have reported slight dissatisfaction with the timeliness of application processing times. Improving this data will improve the accuracy of the “application status” information that customers are able to view in our public PARIS database. It will also help more accurately reflect Ecology’s “on and off clock” time during permit application review windows, helping customers better understand timing surrounding the issuance of their permit. This data will also help us better ensure we are meeting our published decision deadlines.
Equity considerations	Improving our data for consistency and transparency will better inform customers of their application status and timelines. Most of this information is viewable online in Ecology’s public PARIS database. Some customers may not have reliable access to a computer or internet, if at all. Customers can also call an Ecology employee contact for the permit if they would like information on the status of their application or have questions about the process. We will also include information about how to access free interpretation services if assistance is needed in a language other than English.

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Timeframe	March 2026 - December 2026
Success metrics	• Median application processing time (days) - Receipt to complete application • Median application processing time (days) - Complete to final decision • Regulated Customer Survey result - "The decision was timely" • Customer satisfaction rates with clarity of information (Feedback mechanism will be developed alongside efforts to measure CX at the agency level)
Agency or external partners	• Water Quality IT • Water Quality Construction Stormwater Permit subject matter experts (SMEs) • Water Quality Management Team • Ecology IT • Governmental Relations

Table 4. Key Service #3, Improvement 3.1

Improvement 3.2: Revise online permit applications and relevant permit forms to enhance customer understanding of requirements and improve frequency of complete applications.

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Customer input that informed this improvement selection	Survey data; Complaints; Direct Interviews
Why this matters to customers	Customers currently report that it is difficult to complete the application and often have to submit it multiple times until they get it right. Improving the clarity of the permit form/application requirements will help better ensure the customer provides the information needed to process a complete application, reducing the likelihood of back and forth with Ecology and overall frustration with the requirements.
Equity considerations	Requiring complex technical information on permit forms and applications is necessary, especially depending on project complexity. This can disproportionately impact customers with fewer financial or staffing resources, or less technical understanding of our permits. Clearer, more user-friendly forms and applications with information provided in multiple ways (visuals, text, examples, etc.) and languages support more equitable access.
Timeframe	January 2026 – Ongoing
Success metrics	• Median application processing time (days) - Receipt to complete application • Regulated Customer Survey result - "The permit requirements were clear"

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
	- Regulated Customer Survey result - "The forms were easy to use" - Regulated Customer Survey result - "The application instructions were clear" - Regulated Customer Survey result - "It was easy to submit the application online" - Customer satisfaction rates with ease of use and clarity of information (Feedback mechanism will be developed alongside efforts to measure CX at the agency level)
Agency or external partners	- Water Quality IT - Water Quality Construction Stormwater Permit subject matter experts (SMEs) - Water Quality Management Team

Table 5. Key Service #3, Improvement 3.2

Improvement 3.3: Enhance customer capabilities to submit applications, fees, permit documents, and signatures online.

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Customer input that informed this improvement selection	Survey data; Complaints; Direct interviews
Why this matters to customers	Current requirements for signatures, fees, and documents are nuanced and varied dependent on the type of request and create confusion for customers. For example, permit applications are considered “priority reports” by federal law and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and must be signed a certain way. Expanding our ability to legally accept applications, fees, permit documents, and signatures online that have been signed electronically, will reduce confusion and processing times for certain requests.
Equity considerations	Customers applying or submitting a request for a permit modification, transfer, etc. would be most impacted by this improvement. Some customer may not have reliable access to a computer or internet, if at all. We offer the options to submit a paper application through the mail and/or call an Ecology contact if they need assistance with their application. We also have the option for customers to request a waiver from electronic reporting in order to continue to provide various required permit submittals to Ecology via hard copy/mail.
Timeframe	January 2026 – December 2028
Success metrics	- Median application processing time (days) – Receipt to complete application - Regulated Customer Survey result - "The application instructions were clear" - Regulated Customer Survey result - "It was easy to submit the application online"

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
	Customer satisfaction rates with ease of use and clarity of information (Feedback mechanism will be developed alongside efforts to measure CX at the agency level)
Agency or external partners	- Water Quality IT - Water Quality Construction Stormwater Permit subject matter experts (SMEs) - Water Quality Management Team

Table 6. Key Service #3, Improvement 3.3

Key Service #4: Search function of Ecology's website

Description: The search function of Ecology's website provides public access to Ecology services, permits, and reporting, allowing users to search and retrieve information from our website based on key words.

Improvement 4.1: Boost and promote search terms and improve metadata so search function provides expected results.

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Customer input that informed this improvement selection	Complaints; Web help requests; Web feedback forms
Why this matters to customers	Customers want to find relevant content on Ecology's website quickly and easily with predictable search results.
Equity considerations	All users will benefit from search improvements.
Timeframe	May 2026 - September 2026
Success metrics	- Time on page - Scroll rate - Bounce rate - Engagement rate - Customer satisfaction rates with ease of use and clarity of information (Feedback mechanism will be developed alongside efforts to measure CX at the agency level)
Agency or external partners	- Web Communications Team - Ecology will include the vendor for our content management system (RedTech), if needed.

Table 7. Key Service #4, Improvement 4.1

Improvement 4.2: Increase speed of processing time from application to return search results.

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Customer input that informed this improvement selection	Complaints; Web help requests; Web feedback forms
Why this matters to customers	Customers need to find relevant content on Ecology's website quickly and easily with predictable search results.
Equity considerations	Faster, user experiences support more equitable access.
Timeframe	January 2026 – December 2026
Success metrics	• Page load time • Bounce rate • Engagement rate • Customer satisfaction rates with ease of use, navigation, and clarity of information (Feedback mechanism will be developed alongside efforts to measure CX at the agency level)
Agency or external partners	• Web Communications Team • Ecology will include the vendor for our content management system (RedTech), if needed.

Table 8. Key Service #4, Improvement 4.2

Key Service #5: Water right application processing

Description: Ecology reviews water right applications from property owners, businesses, local governments, and other entities requesting authorization to use a predefined quantity of public water for a designated purpose or beneficial use – such as irrigation, domestic supply, commercial or industrial use, and power generation. Ecology evaluates whether water is available, whether the proposed use would affect existing water rights, and whether it meets state legal requirements before issuing a decision on the application.

Improvement 5.1: Develop an online dashboard for customers to view the number of applications in-process / in-queue by Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA).

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Customer input that informed this improvement selection	Survey data; Complaints
Why this matters to customers	Customers want to better understand the application process and approval timeline, as well as the likelihood of approval, by Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA). Providing real-time data and visualization of the application backlog by WRIA increases transparency, enables self-service of information, and provides additional context on how the backlog is affecting the timeliness of permit applications.

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Equity considerations	All applicants will be impacted by this improvement. Some customers may not have reliable access to a computer or internet, if at all. We offer the option to email and/or call an Ecology contact if they want information related to their application or applications in their area.
Timeframe	January 2027 – December 2027
Success metrics	• Critical or serious accessibility issues found in testing • Customer satisfaction rates with ease of use and clarity of information (Feedback mechanism will be developed alongside efforts to measure CX at the agency level)
Agency or external partners	• Water right permit processing team • IT and Governmental Relations DataMart Team

Table 9. Key Service #5, Improvement 5.1

Improvement 5.2: Improve processing times by automating processes within existing systems.

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Customer input that informed this improvement selection	Survey data; Permit processing timeliness data
Why this matters to customers	Customers have expressed frustration with application processing times and backlog.
Equity considerations	All applicants will be impacted by this improvement. No known access barriers.
Timeframe	February 2026 – Unknown. Water Resources will begin by identifying which specific steps of the process can be automated. End date will be determined once opportunities and prioritization have been identified.
Success metrics	• Median new water right application processing time (days) - Receipt to complete application • Median new water right application processing time (days) - Complete to final decision • Median change water right application processing time (days) - Receipt to complete application • Median change water right application processing time (days) - Complete to final decision • Regulated Customer Survey result - "The decision was timely"

Improvement Dimension	Improvement Context & Approach
Agency or external partners	Water right permit processing team

Table 10. Key Service #5, Improvement 5.2

B2. Implementation timeline and readiness

The CX improvements to key services identified in Section B1 are either planned or currently underway. Program staff and leadership were closely involved in identifying and prioritizing these efforts, which support organizational readiness and alignment with the proposed timeframes. Potential constraints that could affect timelines include availability of resources, staff capacity, competing operational priorities, and the time required to test and refine new or enhanced tools and processes. For improvements that involve technology changes or system integration, timelines may also depend on coordination with internal IT resources.

Ecology is incorporating Plan–Do–Check–Adjust (PDCA) principles into its implementation approach. CX improvements will include pilot testing, evaluation of results and user feedback, and iterative refinement before broader implementation. This approach may extend certain phases of work but is intended to support effective, sustainable improvements. Emphasis will be placed on thoughtful implementation and usability to help ensure long-term success.

Section C: Executive Order-Required Enablers

C1. Staff training and workforce preparation

Ecology’s Customer Service Principles

In 2025, Ecology established its Customer Service Principles (Policy 18-01) to strengthen alignment with the direction of Executive Order 25-06. The policy reinforces the agency’s commitment to providing equivalent access to information and services, maintaining a respectful environment for employees and customers, and ensuring staff are accessible, communicative, and responsive in addressing customer questions, concerns, and requests. The policy requires each office, program, and division to develop and maintain a customer service plan outlining how they will implement these principles. Each customer service plan must include established response timeframes, such as acknowledging or responding to customer inquiries within a specified period (e.g., 48 hours). These plans clarify customer service expectations, ensure responsive communications with customers, and are reviewed and updated at least once a year to support continuous improvement.

Ecology also requires staff to complete plain language trainings and offers ongoing resources to support programs in delivering effective, customer-centered service.

Training Focus #1: Ensuring all Ecology staff know how to create accessible materials and documents so all customers have equivalent access.

Training Dimension	Details
Course Name(s)	• Create More Accessible Word Documents • Create More Accessible Email Messages in Outlook • Create More Accessible Excel Workbooks • Create More Accessible PowerPoint Slides • Accessible Document Design for Beginners • Document Accessibility Team Meetups (optional training opportunity)
Audience	Required for all Ecology employees (Document Accessibility Team Meetups are optional)
Timing/Frequency: Within 30 days of hire	• Create More Accessible Word Documents • Create More Accessible Email Messages in Outlook
Timing/Frequency: Within 60 days of hire	• Create More Accessible Excel Workbooks • Create More Accessible PowerPoint Slides
Timing/Frequency: Within 1 year of hire	Accessible Document Design for Beginners
Timing/Frequency: Monthly	Document Accessibility Team Meetups (optional training opportunity)
Training source	Department of Enterprise Services (DES) courses set up for Ecology-only attendance; Document Accessibility Team Meetups provided by internal Document Accessibility Workgroup/Community of Practice to augment required trainings.

Table 11. Training Focus #1

Training Focus #2: Ensuring all Ecology staff have the knowledge and skills to use plain language to show respect, minimize confusion and errors, and improve compliance, clarity, and ease of translation.

Training Dimension	Details
Course Name(s)	Plain Language – Writing and Design (formerly Writing Documents in Plain Talk)
Audience	Required for all Ecology employees
Timing/Frequency	Within six months of hire
Training source	Department of Enterprise Services (DES) courses set up for Ecology-only attendance

Table 12. Training Focus #2

Training Focus #3: Ensuring agency programs have learning resources available to meet their customer service needs.

Training Dimension	Details
Course Name(s)	Determined by business area based on needs, in consultation with Ecology Training Team.
Audience	Any Ecology program, unit, team or employee identified as needing learning and development support in customer service.
Timing/Frequency	Variable based on business needs.
Training source (enterprise, agency, external)	Variable based on business needs. Courses on customer service could be from: • DES Enterprise Courses, specifically those in customer service and related topics, such as Government to Government • LinkedIn Learning resources • External training programs identified by business groups, such as Ecology's Enforcement Coordination Team

Table 13. Training Focus #3

C2. Support and resource needs

Successful implementation of this CX Improvement Plan will benefit from continued cross-program coordination and sustained executive sponsorship to support collaboration and alignment as initiatives begin and advance.

Ecology has teams and positions across the agency that provide technical assistance and guidance related to user-centered design, accessibility standards, and data integration that can offer support and mentoring to further strengthen implementation efforts. As improvements involving system enhancements advance, Ecology will prioritize these projects to ensure continued access to IT development capacity and project management support to help maintain the timelines provided above.

Ecology provides additional support for staff training and change management – particularly related to new tools, process changes, and customer communication practices – which will help ensure consistent adoption across programs and offices.

Where improvements intersect with enterprise platforms or externally managed systems, Ecology will continue to coordinate with partner agencies like WaTech, Your Washington, and Department of Enterprise Services to align timelines and technical dependencies.

Ecology intends to implement the identified improvements within existing resource structures, while continuing to monitor capacity and funding considerations as work progresses.

Section D: Access, Language, and Usability

D1. Application of plain language to CX improvements

Ecology's plain language policy (Policy 20-02: Using Plain Language at Ecology) ensures all employees are responsible for using plain language principles in their communications. The key services Ecology has identified largely focus on improved online experiences, so our web team, access coordinator, digital accessibility coordinator, and app developers will play a critical role in accessible navigation. Any instructions, forms, and

application and web content that is created or updated to improve customer experience will go through a plain language review by employees and their program’s communications staff.

D2. Accessibility or usability considerations

Accessibility is an ongoing requirement of Ecology’s work, internally and externally. Any new technology, or major upgrades to existing technology, will be designed to meet our compliance standards. Ecology’s key milestones include achieving WCAG 2.1 AA level compliance for all public-facing applications and websites by April 2026, followed by achieving WCAG 2.2 AA level compliance by July 2026, which will remain our minimum standard. Our standard for accessibility will continue to evolve as needed as universal standards change.

Technology essential to the selected key services will be tested for accessibility using automated tools, keyboard navigation, and screen readers. Selected key services will include a public accessibility statement. The statement will also include contact information to report issues and request equivalent access where services are not yet accessible or additional help is needed

In addition to the accessibility methods above, improvements to Biblio (Key Service #2) will also reduce accessibility barriers by automating backend processes that will significantly increasing the visibility of accessibility issues to Ecology staff and publications coordinators – helping ensure awareness and remediation of known accessibility issues before publications and resources are published to Biblio for public use.

D3. Language access

Ecology evaluates public-facing tools and communications to assess the language needs of each audience. We provide additional strategic guidance at the project-level and in-house language services for Spanish-language communication.

Ecology will continue to focus on ensuring practical access to vital information. All communication tools will clearly promote the availability of free language services, and Ecology staff are equipped to promote these services in customers interactions, when applicable.

Each key service improvement team will receive strategic guidance from agency language access subject matter experts to support effective, meaningful, and equitable communication as the customer service improvement team designs improvements and related materials.

Section E: Technology

E1. Key opportunity to improve CX using technology

Technology will play a foundational role in improving customer experience. Ecology is currently developing an automated data solution to consolidate application information for all of Ecology’s credentials to enhance our ability to monitor, track, and publish processing metrics. This will reduce manual data extraction and validation work for employees, improve data accuracy, and allow us to better track and share application processing timelines and status with customers (Key Service #1). Customers will have clearer visibility into where their application stands, what steps remain, and what to expect next — reducing uncertainty and unnecessary follow-up calls or emails.

Ecology is currently implementing an application modernization framework to guide the development and redesign of agency applications and systems. The framework emphasizes flexible, reusable components to improve overall efficiency in designing applications and incorporating customer feedback into any improvements. It also establishes agency standards for user experience, accessibility, and performance. This framework is first being

applied to the redesign of Biblio (Key Service #2), with lessons learned informing future application development across the agency. Over time, this approach will accelerate enhancements, expand online self-service options for customers, and strengthen accessibility compliance across Ecology's systems and processes. Collectively, these technology enhancements are intended to improve customer experience by making our services clearer, faster, more consistent, and easier to use.

E2. Alignment with WaTech and enterprise efforts

Okta and Auth0 for WA.GOV

Migrating to the WA.GOV platform will help people access the state services they need, or may qualify for, in one centralized location. Ecology will migrate our user authentication and authorization from a myriad of legacy systems (SAW, Adam/Azman, etc.) into modern, secure, and WaTech-approved technologies.

Application and Cloud Modernization

Cloud enables our organization to deliver services faster, scale on demand, improve resilience, and align costs with actual usage. Ecology is modernizing our applications to use current technologies that provide a foundation of security and long-term agility.

Enterprise Reporting Modernization

By adopting Power BI at Ecology, programs can create external-facing dashboards that provide more timely and detailed data to the public and partners. Establishing a Power BI governance framework before broad rollout ensures security, oversight, and controlled growth from the start. By adopting Power BI at Ecology, programs can create external-facing dashboards that provide more timely and detailed data to the public and partners. This effort aligns with statewide priorities for secure, scalable, and well-managed technology platforms.

Section F: Supporting Context

F1. CX work related to other executive orders

In addition to the improvements outlined in Section B, Ecology is implementing improvements that affect customer-facing services in response to other Executive Orders. This work complements the CX improvements described in this plan by strengthening transparency, improving usability of customer-facing materials and systems, and supporting more consistent service delivery across programs. Coordination across these initiatives helps reduce duplication and align implementation timelines.

Executive Order 25-02 Assessing Regulatory Efficiency and Addressing Washington's Affordable Housing Crisis

Ecology is committed to supporting progress on Executive Order 25-02 and is implementing strategies intended to support new housing construction and benefit multiple customer groups, including local governments, businesses and contractors, and property owners or purchasers. Over the past year, we have advanced this work by implementing the following strategies:

- Strengthening climate resilience of homes by allowing flood resiliency improvements to be made before homes are impacted by a flooding event.

- Expanding opportunities to clean up sites for affordable housing by updating our eligibility criteria to expand participation in the Affordable Housing Cleanup Grant Program and waiving fees for the Voluntary Cleanup Program.
- Promoting new housing construction grant opportunities to communities and developers through Ecology's Affordable Housing Cleanup Grant.
- Connecting with local governments to inform them how to leverage exemption thresholds and flexibility in the SEPA process.

Ecology continues to find opportunities where our work can help address the affordable housing crisis. One opportunity we are exploring is through [NextCycle Washington](#), a project accelerator program that supports a circular economy by helping organizations develop construction products and materials that can remain in circulation for as long as possible - reducing waste while maximizing sustainability and affordability.

Executive Order 25-03 Improving Transparency and Building Efficiency in the State's Permitting and Licensing Processes

Under Executive Order 25-03, Ecology is implementing strategies to improve the transparency and efficiency of our credentialing processes. In alignment with this directive, Ecology has taken several steps to understand how timeliness is tracked across our credentials, evaluate customer experience impacts, identify best practices and gaps, and develop a more coordinated approach to tracking and communicating the status of credentials across 17 different reporting systems.

Ecology is centering the customer experience in our implementation of these efforts to ensure our processes are efficient, transparent, and predictable for our customers. Our strategies to improve transparency and build efficiency focus on:

- Publishing decision deadlines and implementing refund guarantees for 19 credentials by spring 2026.
- Centralizing the agency's timeliness data, from 17 different systems, into a central repository to streamline reporting. Centralizing this data will allow Ecology to have real-time access to our application processing data to see what is working, identify barriers or challenges, and address issues before they become problems. About 85% of Ecology credentials will report timeliness data through the "Timeliness DataMart" for the 2026 annual report.
- Implementing a new online application status tracker (Key service #1) for 30 application processes that don't currently have a way to check the status of an application online. This new tracker will use the data in the Timeliness DataMart and provide the ability to search for applications online to check status within the receipt, review, and approval process. Our pilot test is set to start in summer 2026.
- Building new or updated process flow charts for all credentials to identify all the steps in the process, standardize steps and processes internally, and improve transparency and predictability for our customers. The current process flow chart template includes steps for the "Applicant", "Department of Ecology", and "Public or Other interested parties" and has been used for over fifteen years. Ecology will update the template to incorporate steps that include Tribes and partner agencies to increase transparency on required steps and improve predictability for customers.
- Implementing agency standards for consistent terminology and documentation of credential.

- Developing a formal agency refund guarantee policy by winter 2026.
- Aligning implementation of EO 25-03 with EO 25-06 to use customer experience tools and metrics to inform our credential work.
- Continuing work on the process improvement projects identified in our EO 25-03 workplan and this implementation plan.

Executive Order 25-10 A New Foundation for Washington State's Governmental Relations with Sovereign Tribal Nations

Under Executive Order 25-10, Ecology is currently updating our agency Tribal Engagement and Consultation Plan to support a government-to-government framework between Ecology and Washington's Tribes and formalize and improve Tribal consultation practices. The plan aligns with this directive by establishing agency standards, guidance, and best practices for employee engagement with federally recognized Tribes, including required training on Tribal relations.

The plan outlines actions Ecology will take to ensure we provide early and meaningful engagement to Tribes, incorporate Indigenous priorities and knowledge into decision-making, and use Tribal feedback to continuously improve the information, programs, and services Ecology provides.

F2. Communications and change management

Ecology continues to make improvements to processes which support open, accurate, and transparent communications with customers and stakeholders on issues ranging from permit application status trackers to updates on work related to climate change. Because employees are our greatest resource, the agency takes a 'One Ecology' approach to ensure all employees understand what is changing, the rationale, how it relates to the strategic plan, the specific approach, and their role in the initiative.

All communications strategies begin internally to ensure employees are informed and supported in providing accurate and timely information to customers and stakeholders. When updates, changes, or improvements occur, Ecology informs staff through a variety of channels, including emails from leadership, articles on the agency 'Inside Ecology' news feed, postings on internal SharePoint pages, and cascading emails through program managers to individual teams. When appropriate, Ecology also schedules employee forums, office hours, and team meetings to allow for questions, discussion, and feedback from staff. Employee communication is critical to ensure we implement the new improvements as expected and we provide the public with the accurate information they need in a timely manner.

Ecology will use traditional approaches as well as other proactive strategies and tactics to inform customers of changes and updates. Agency communications strategies use a combination of channels to ensure audience connection including (but not limited to) website postings, GovDelivery list serve mailings, newsletters, industry association announcements, social media, existing advisory committees and stakeholder meetings, as well as community meetings. We will also update supporting documentation of key services and other CX improvements to include updated instructions and information, if appropriate. In all communications, language access is a top consideration, and Ecology ensures information is shared in languages other than English to follow compliance standards and best practices.

F3. Community engagement

Community engagement is an essential element in shaping and refining Ecology's CX improvements. Actively engaging with the customers we serve is embedded in Ecology's culture, and we will continue to apply our

[community engagement strategy](#) as a core component of our CX and key service improvement efforts. Meaningful engagement improves transparency, helps clarify regulatory requirements, and strengthens our understanding of what our customers need and value – ensuring our services remain responsive to the wide array of customers we serve.

Ecology regularly convenes advisory groups, public forums, stakeholder meetings, and technical workgroups that bring together representatives from local governments, Tribes, businesses, community organizations, and regulated entities. These engagement efforts are designed to share information about our work and gather actionable feedback to identify meaningful improvements and guide implementation.

Advisory groups and public forums

Ecology’s engagement efforts through advisory groups and public forums involve agency leadership meeting directly with community and business representatives, subject matter experts, and other interested parties to listen, learn, and explore solutions with those impacted by our work. Recent examples include:

- **Agriculture Water Quality Advisory Committee:** This committee convenes a broad array of agricultural interests and provides an open forum for agricultural producers and environmental interest groups to meet with Ecology staff and discuss agency work that impacts agriculture. The committee provides valuable feedback as we work together to implement policies and programs to protect water quality and support viable agriculture.
- **Stormwater Action Monitoring Work Group:** This work group involves a diverse set of representatives and subject matter experts of local, state, and federal governments, environmental and business organizations, public ports, Tribes, and agriculture. The goal of the work group is to collaboratively develop and implement a sustainable, cooperative stormwater monitoring and assessment framework to reduce stormwater pollution in Puget Sound.
- **6PPD Action Plan Advisory Committee:** Ecology convened this diverse committee – bringing together Tribal, federal, state, and local governments, community organizations, industry, and university researchers – to collaboratively identify and advance solutions to reduce the pollution and sources of 6PPDQ released from tires in Washington. The committee delivered recommendations to the Legislature focused on addressing key knowledge and data gaps related to 6PPD and 6PPD-quinone.

Tribal engagement

Tribal engagement is an integral component of Ecology’s approach to centering and improving Tribal experience with our services and processes. While Tribes are sovereign governments – not customers – Ecology’s work often intersects with Tribal rights, treaty rights, interests, territories, and resources. Recognizing Tribal self-determination and sovereignty, Ecology engages in formal government-to-government consultation as well as informal engagement to ensure Tribal perspectives are incorporated early and meaningfully in agency actions and decision-making. This engagement supports transparency, builds trust, and improves how Ecology designs and implements processes that affect Tribal communities and resources. Under Executive Order 25-10, Ecology is updating our Tribal Engagement and Consultation Plan to further strengthen this framework and formalize agency standards, guidance, and expectations for engagement with Tribes (further detailed in Section F1). The updated plan reinforces early outreach, engagement, and consultation, outlines clear processes and roles, and supports continuous improvement in how Ecology collaborates with Tribes in carrying out our mission.

Ecology’s Community Engagement Plan

Ecology recently updated its Community Engagement Plan to support and standardize our engagement efforts. The plan establishes agency-wide guidance and best practices across all customer groups, particularly overburdened

communities and vulnerable populations. The plan outlines a systematic framework for scoping, planning, implementing, and evaluating engagement efforts. It provides practical tools for identifying stakeholders, selecting appropriate engagement methods, communicating early and clearly, documenting feedback, and assessing outcomes. By embedding these practices across programs, Ecology ensures engagement activities are intentional, transparent, and aligned with CX principles.

The framework also provides guidance for identifying and addressing barriers that may disproportionately impact overburdened communities and vulnerable populations and limit their participation. A key strategy for reducing financial barriers to participation is lived experience compensation. Under RCW 43.03.220, as amended in 2021, Ecology is authorized to compensate eligible individuals for participation in relevant agency workgroups, provided those individuals are not otherwise compensated. Consistent with the Office of Equity's Community Compensation Guidelines and statutory requirements (RCW 43.03.220(5)), Ecology has developed internal guidance to support implementation of the amended RCW. Following this guidance, Ecology has offered lived experience compensation to participants in multiple agency workgroups and will continue to strategically expand implementation of the program to strengthen equitable representation in agency workgroups and engagement processes.