

**Gloucester County
Administrative Policy**
Gloucester, Virginia

Section: 700
Supersedes: N/A
Title: Citizen Engagement and Issue Resolution

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Effective Date: October 1, 2016
Authorized By: County Administrator

Citizen Engagement and Issue Resolution Policy

700.1 Purpose

This policy is intended to enable the County of Gloucester to, in a prompt and courteous fashion, effectively address program and service delivery concerns and issues of citizens. The policy will assist the County in providing excellent service to the public and contribute to continuous improvement of operations.

It is the intent of the County to enhance citizen satisfaction by:

- addressing concerns and issues promptly;
- reviewing concerns and issues, vetting each to ensure findings and responses are accurate and address concerns and issues thoroughly; and
- using identified concerns and issues as opportunities to improve programs, service delivery and government operations

700.2 Definitions and Clarifications

For this policy:

A “concern” is an initial expression on a matter of interest or importance and/or possible dissatisfaction on a specific topic that may be addressed with a response or resolution, at the level of department director or lower.

An “issue” is an unresolved concern of importance to a citizen or citizens, related to a program, service, operation, facility, employee and/or employee action that has been escalated above the department director level.

Issues arise when an initial concern is not resolved and/or the County has not satisfactorily met the citizen’s expectation at the department director level or below, and a response or resolution is requested.

Issues may be related to but not limited to:

- failure to respond to routine requests or expected services;
- inadequate or unsatisfactory services;
- failure to operate in alignment with established policies and/or procedures;
- undue delay in taking action or responding;
- inaccurate or incorrect information; and
- disrespectful or unhelpful employees

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This policy is not intended to address:

- decisions or actions of Constitutional Officers, County Attorney, Registrar, Social Services and other entities that do not report through County Administration;
- decisions or actions of the Gloucester Board of Supervisors, advisory groups of the Board, or other regulatory entities required by code;
- concerns or issues of disagreement with existing County ordinances;
- matters that are handled by regional authorities, state and federal governments, constitutional officers, and courts of law;
- a general inquiry or specific request for information regarding a program or service;
- an opinion, feedback, comment or expression of interest on a program or service;
- an expression of approval or compliment for a County program, service, product, process or employee; and
- concerns or issues raised internally by a County employee

700.3 Process/Procedure for Resolving an Issue

Citizen engagement is the process of establishing open communications and mutual sharing of information between citizens and County employees designed to identify and address issues for collective action and provide for an accountable and responsive government.

It is the responsibility of the citizen to attempt to resolve concerns by cooperating with County employee(s) directly involved with the concern or issue, where and when appropriate. It is the responsibility of all County employees to attempt to resolve concerns before they become issues needing resolution, and identify opportunities to improve County services and programs.

From initial contact to final resolution, County employees should feel empowered to address concerns and issues within their levels of authority and responsibility, and refer to supervisory and administrative staff when needed. Whenever possible, employees receiving a concern should attempt to resolve it at that time.

Regular interactions and mutual exchanges among citizens and employees are not only expected in the public domain, but are encouraged and desired in a participatory democracy. To that end, cordial and civil dialogue is to be expected by all parties.

Communication between employees and citizens should be characterized by:

- courtesy and honesty;
- active listening to facilitate effective communication;

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- complete and accurate information;
- prompt and timely responses to all inquires; and
- openness and responsiveness to input and feedback

Please refer to the *Community Engagement – Citizen Concern and Issue Resolution Process Flow Chart* which is included at the end of this policy to accompany the process steps explained below.

Step 1: Employee Engagement

When a concern is received from a citizen, the employee receiving the concern should immediately, or within three (3) working days:

- acknowledge orally, in writing or by e-mail, receipt of concern to the citizen;
- re-state the concern to the citizen to ensure there is an agreed upon understanding of the concern; and
- share the concern with other appropriate employees most knowledgeable and/or responsible on the topic area related to the concern

A knowledgeable/responsible employee should review the concern and provide a response to the citizen immediately if possible or otherwise within five (5) working days. If more time is needed, the employee will communicate an expected response date to the citizen.

Step 2: Manager/Director Engagement

In the event an employee's response to the citizen's concern is not satisfactory, and the citizen requests escalation of the concern, the concern will be forwarded to the employee's manager and/or department director (whichever applicable) for review and action. The manager and/or department director will:

- acknowledge orally, in writing or by e-mail, receipt of concern to the citizen within three (3) working days;
- review the initial concern and response to the citizen from Step 1;
- review any relevant information, codes, policies, and procedures;
- gather necessary information and consult with knowledgeable/responsible employees;
- further research and investigate the issue as required; and
- communicate findings and a proposed resolution, if warranted, to the citizen

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Findings and a proposed resolution, if warranted, will be communicated to the citizen within fifteen (15) working days. If more time is needed, the manager and/or director will communicate an expected response date to the citizen.

Step 3: County Administration Engagement

If the citizen is not satisfied with the response and/or proposed resolution communicated by the department director, the citizen may escalate the concern to a formal issue by completing and submitting a [Gloucester County Citizen's Issue Resolution Form](#) (Form AP700.1) directly to the Department of Community Engagement. The Community Engagement Director will receive and log the form in a designated database and notify the citizen within three (3) working days that the issue will be further investigated and formally studied.

As part of the study and investigation process, the Community Engagement Director may:

- review findings, the response to the citizen and proposed resolution in Step 2;
- consult with department directors and the citizen involved, if needed, for full understanding of the issue; and
- evaluate the findings and proposed resolution and identify options and/or other actions and recommendations, if needed, that may be taken to address the issue and/or improve services, programs and operations

Upon completion of the formal review, the Community Engagement Director will summarize all information and findings into a briefing and share with County Administrator or Deputy County Administrator for review and action within twenty (20) working days of receipt of the [Gloucester County Citizen's Issue Resolution Form](#).

Within ten (10) working days of the briefing with County Administration, the citizen will be provided a response by the County Administrator or Deputy County Administrator in writing, with a copy to the department director, that may include:

- findings, position and/or decision of the County on the issue and any recommended resolution to the issue, if warranted;
- reasons for the County's position or decision; and
- any actions the County has, or will take, as a result of the issue being identified

If more time is needed, the County Administrator or Deputy County Administrator will communicate an expected response date to the citizen.

In cases when a response is provided to the citizen by the Deputy County Administrator, and the citizen is not satisfied with the response, the citizen may request further review and

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consideration by the County Administrator. In these cases, the County Administrator will review all relevant information and respond to the citizen within ten (10) working days.

700.4 Board of Supervisor Engagement

If the citizen is not satisfied with the final findings, position, and/or recommended resolution of the County Administrator, the citizen should consider contacting the member of the Gloucester Board of Supervisors representing the citizen's magisterial district and/or the at-large members of the Board.

700.5 Records/Document Maintenance/Reporting

The department directors and Community Engagement Director shall maintain files of all records and documents relevant to escalated issues in accordance with the County's records retention policy.

The Community Engagement Director will conduct tracking of issues and trends identified through the issue resolution process in the designated database. Review and analysis of compiled data will be summarized into a report for County Administration, not less than annually, and utilized for continual process improvement and enhanced delivery of services and government operations.

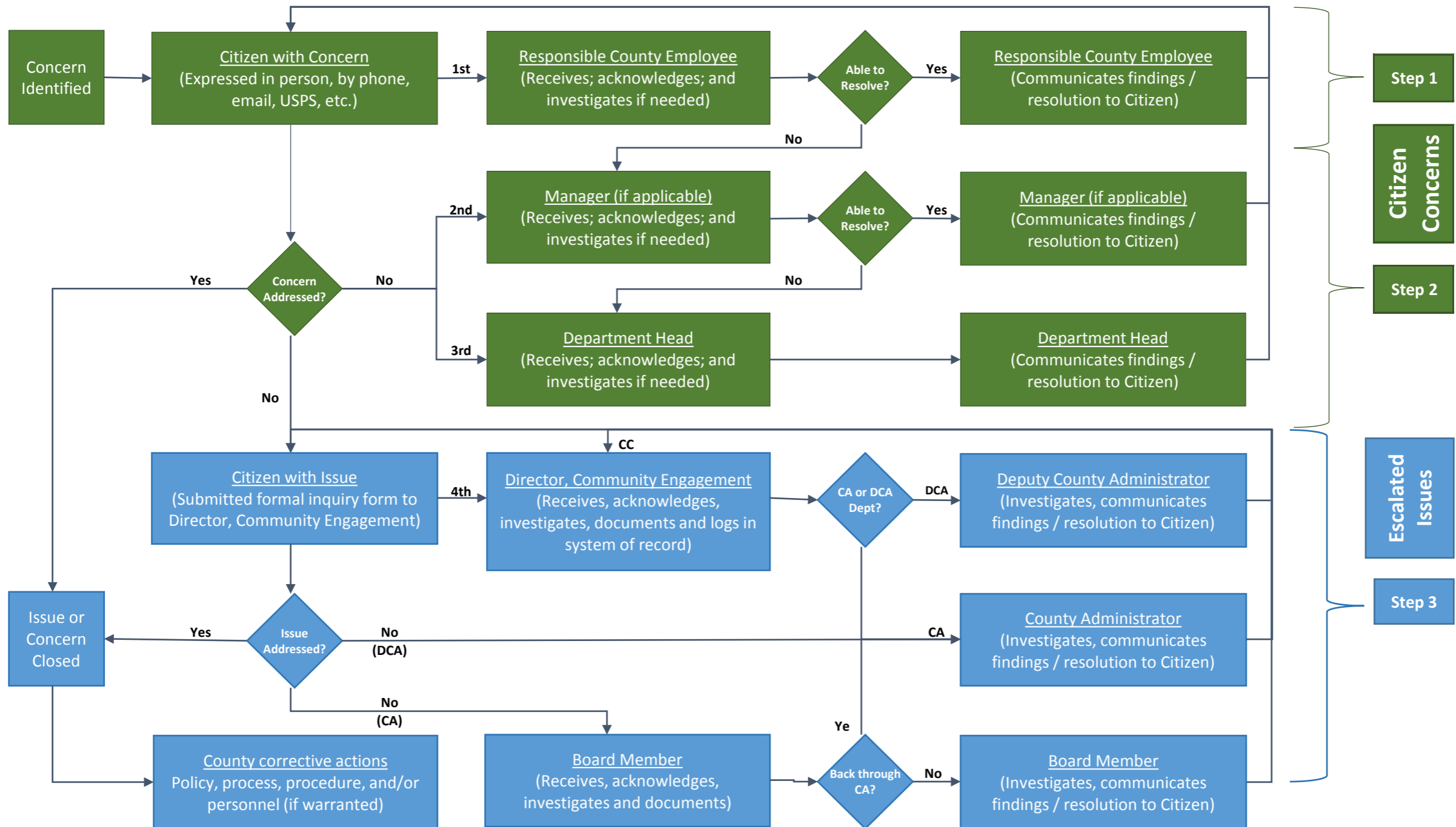
700.6 Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Gloucester County.

700.7 Availability, Distribution and Adherence

A copy of this policy shall be available for review on the County's website, in the County Administrator's Office, and/or in any County department upon request during normal business hours. Department directors are responsible for distributing this policy to their employees and for employees' adherence to the policy, process and procedures.

Community Engagement - Citizen Concern and Issue Resolution Process Flow



<http://gloucesterva.info/issueresolution>