



Benchmarking Quality of Service: An International Comparison of Water Regulators

Improving customer service is a key business driver for water utilities. In the 2014 SWAN Global Utility Survey, customer service was ranked the number one business driver by water utilities, cited by 76% of respondents. However, what differentiates high quality service from poor quality service and how are utilities measured by their performance? This report examines how five, international water regulators in Australia, Brazil, the Netherlands, UK, and U.S., uniquely benchmark and incentivise their utility operators to improve their quality of service, for example:

- In Australia, the State of Victoria uses the “mystery caller” technique to evaluate call center performance based on the operators’ tone and greeting manner.
- In Brazil, winners of the National Sanitation Quality Award are hosted in an elaborate gala award ceremony and invited to an international benchmarking tour to view state-of-the-art technologies and management practices.
- In the Netherlands, the water regulatory association, VEWIN directly surveys nearly 12,000 customers to gauge customer satisfaction.
- In the UK, the economic water regulator, Ofwat, requires water companies to propose long-term, outcomes with linked financial rewards and penalties needed to deliver high quality service to customers.
- In the U.S., utilities can develop their own benchmarking exercises or be guided by a voluntary assessment program. Industry organisations also have annual awards to acknowledge performance excellence for outstanding utilities.

As the need to improve customer service grows, international water regulators will play a vital role in guiding and incentivising utilities to meet and exceed their quality of service standards. Each water regulator is at a different stage of its development with different needs and challenges. The goal of this white paper will be to compare different quality of service standards, identify innovative benchmarking strategies, and encourage future collaboration.

The full report is available for SWAN Forum members. For more information, please contact Amir Cahn at amirc@swan-forum.com