

Modernizing Service at the Michigan Department of State 100-day report

Every Michigan resident deserves efficient access to state services. And too often they need to wait in line for hours to do business with the Department of State. It's unacceptable, and it needs to change.

In the first 100 days of my administration, we have begun a deep dive into how our department operates to ensure we deliver the best possible service. As part of that work, I personally visited every one of our 131 branch offices to speak with nearly every department employee – and many residents – about their experiences. I saw how hard our staff works to serve the public and the long hours they endure to deliver those services. I noted that one-third of our self-service kiosks were broken, and in general they were too difficult to use. And I spoke with many customers who had to wait in line far too long to get access to basic state services, such as renewing their license plate or transferring a title.

But I also saw how much opportunity we have to modernize our Secretary of State branch offices.

Our current system is inconsistent, outdated and inefficient. Fixing it will require a top-to-bottom review. I am committed to pursuing sustainable, data-driven solutions that are aggressive, innovative and implemented in collaboration with our dedicated staff throughout the state.

Recommended solutions

To achieve our goal of delivering efficient service that, among other things, enables citizens to renew their plates and licenses in under 30 minutes, we will be unveiling a number of reforms in the months ahead.

They fall broadly into two categories: modernizing how we interact with Michigan residents and improving operations in branch offices themselves.

Modernizing interactions with customers

- **Upgrade online services and communications.** We will revamp our website and other communications, including mailings, to be more relevant and user friendly. We will ensure more people know about our online services and can access them efficiently. We will simplify mailings to better provide details about information or documentation to bring for a productive visit to our branches.
- **Provide targeted support to our highest volume customers.** We will work directly with our auto dealers, manufacturers and other partners who we interact with frequently to reduce the need for them to make repeated visits to our branches.
- **Revamp self-service kiosks to ensure reliable service.** We will make improvements to hardware and software so kiosks provide more services and break down less often.
- **Review internal policies and pursue legislative reforms.** I plan to work with our legislature and other agencies to explore options such as multi-year license plates and automatic driver's license renewal to streamline services for our citizens.

Road to Branches 2.0

It's also time to bring our branch offices into a new era. We call this Branches 2.0, our plan to upgrade our offices to ensure visits to them are smooth and short.

- **Create culture of support for staff.** We plan to create a workplace environment where every member of our team is valued, respected, engaged and supported as they serve on the front lines every day interacting with our citizens. We will review job classifications, recruitment, training, labor-management relations and policies.
- **Improve physical environment of offices.** Our branch offices will be welcoming, warm, inclusive environments that celebrate local communities while providing efficient service in an organized setting.
- **Expand features that work and restructure those that don't.** Our appointment system is well used and well liked. We will increase appointment opportunities in offices throughout the state to reach more residents. But the MI-TIME system, which enables residents to get in line online or via text before arriving at 43 of our branches, was failing to provide accurate wait times and creating deep frustration for our customers and employees. We took it offline, recalibrated it and have begun redeploying the improved system in many branches.
- **Look for opportunities to continuously streamline operations.** We will pilot ideas such as creating express lines in large branch offices for those with quick transactions and placing greeters in the busiest locations to welcome residents and answer questions.
- **Encourage customer and employee feedback.** Ongoing feedback from customers and employees is important. As we roll out these and other changes in the months ahead, we will be increasing opportunities for them to provide meaningful input and suggestions that we can incorporate effectively.

Finally, we ask for patience. These issues are the result of short-term solutions over the years that have yielded only partial results. We are ready and determined to rebuild a system of delivering services that is modern and effective.

Michigan's hard-working residents and our employees deserve no less.