Airport Service Quality Frameworks

Introduction

Airport service quality frameworks identify the service standards that airlines and their passengers can expect from airports in return for the airport charges they pay.

While service quality frameworks are most effective at airports where robust economic regulation exists, they are relevant to all airports reflecting good business practice that brings benefits for all parties involved.

Recognizing airlines are the primary users and customers of airports and a major source of revenue for them, service quality frameworks should always be developed based on a collaborative approach to meet user's needs.

Objectives

The objectives of airport service quality frameworks are to:

- Clearly define airport service levels and quality standards based on users' needs.
- Support airlines operational efficiency and the customer experience.
- Measure the performance of airport facilities and assets.
- Promote the consistent and cost-effective delivery of airport performance.
- Establish accountability and assurance for customers in return for user charges.
- Foster continuous improvements through effective monitoring and measurement.
- Enhance trust and communication between airports and airline-users.

Note the scope of these frameworks does not include elements relating to agreements with Ground Handling Service Providers.

Key Features of Airport Service Quality Frameworks

Best practice frameworks typically include:

- Well-defined objectives and key performance indicators that reflect airline priorities.
- Clearly understood and practical measurement methodologies that are automated wherever possible.
- To the greatest extent possible objective (quantitative) measures rather than subjective (perception) based measures.
- Service levels and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) established through airport-airline community consultation based on informed decision making e.g., understand the existing baseline, identify options and select the optimum solution based on a balance between costs and performance.
- Identifying the expectations, responsibilities and accountabilities of all parties including the collection of data, measuring performance, and reporting results.
- Effective governance to periodically review performance e.g.
  - Regular monitoring through local associations e.g., Airline Operators Committee (AOC).
  - Management performance reviews that may include changes to scope and measures e.g., quarterly and/or annual reviews.
  - A defined escalation process and accountability mechanism if performance is unsatisfactory.
  - An auditing process to provide a transparent, independent assessment of whether performance against standards has been measured and reported as intended.
  - Transparency regarding actual airport performance.
- Airports are made up of a balanced set of integrated sub-systems and processes; therefore, both under and over-performance in any one system can result in extra costs and operational consequences and should therefore be avoided.
- Airlines may voluntarily agree to have elements of their performance tracked to support a

better understanding of airport quality: however, this should:

  - Not impose service standards / targets on airlines or result in adverse commercial impacts.
  - Recognize that airlines operate in a very competitive landscape and are penalized by the market for poor operational performance.
- The scope of service quality frameworks is typically focused on:
  - Passenger experience touch points/ processing facilities.
  - Critical operational assets – passenger processing, airfield, back of house.

Airport Processing Facilities

Passenger and staff queuing times should be measured for each airport sub-system from the back of the queue to start of the relevant process, and ideally include total transaction times so the end-to-end performance can be monitored.

Typical passenger terminal queuing processes are:

- Passenger departures and transfer security screening.
- Staff security screening.
- Passport Control (emigration and immigration):
  - While airports do not usually have direct control over these processes, they typically have a formal relationship with control authorities and are best placed to discuss service levels with them.
- Queuing times for passengers requiring additional assistance.
- Vehicle control posts and security search to access airside.

Measurement is typically on a per-passenger or per-vehicle queuing time and is conducted on a regular frequency (e.g., a 5-minute KPI measured every 15 minutes). The KPI is often the percentage of median measurements that are within the target. Where possible, automated measurement methods should be used.

Asset Availability – Passenger Sensitive Equipment (PSE)

Passenger facing assets typically include:

- Passenger lifts, escalators, conveyors.
- Automated People Mover (APM) Systems.
- On-airport bussing e.g., inter-terminal, to gates.
- Passenger Boarding Bridges (PBB).
- Elevating equipment for boarding and disembarking passengers with accessibility needs where provided by airports.

Asset availability is commonly measured as the percentage of time that the asset is serviceable and ready for use. While each airport is different and requires a cost/benefit analysis of options, a high level of service is typically required for passenger facing assets i.e., assets available 97%-99% during live operations.

Asset Availability – Other

The availability of other assets can be just as critical as PSE. Airports and airlines are encouraged to agree on key service elements to protect the operation and avoid delays and disruption.

For critical assets, such as runways, KPI's can include how quickly assets can be returned to service after a major disruption event, in addition to asset availability.

Airfield and Related Elements:

- Runway/s as the primary airport asset.
- Taxiway, taxi lanes and parking aprons.
- Aircraft parking and stand availability.
- Stands and their associated infrastructure:
  - Fixed Electrical Ground Power (FEGP).
  - Pre-Conditioned Air (PCA).
  - Visual Docking Guidance Systems (VDGS).
- Navigation Aids (NAVAIDS) – where provided by the Airport.
- Snow plough and de-icing equipment - where relevant and provided by the airport.

Passenger Terminal Facilities

Airport systems are inter-related and will impact the overall passenger experience and operation, appropriate KPI's should be considered for:

- Baggage handling systems (BHS) e.g., "in-system time" of bags and the availability of the system.
- Baggage Misconnect Rates.
- Arrival reclaim belts availability.
- Airport common use equipment availability e.g., check-in desks/bag drops, gate areas.
- Flight Information Display Systems (FIDS) availability.

- Wi-Fi availability, coverage and quality.
- Pier Service – The percentage of passengers able to access the aircraft via a contact gate.

Passenger experience elements

Elements of the passenger experience may be assessed with quantitative measures while others will rely on a qualitative assessment via surveys and other means:

- Departure lounge / gate / arrivals seating.
- Cleanliness – airport overall and toilets.
- Ease of wayfinding and availability of flight information.
- Passengers with Restricted Mobility (PRM) service timeliness.

Service Quality Frameworks as part of Economic Oversight or Concession Agreements

Given airport market power, to ensure that airlines and passengers receive value for money in return for the charges they pay, supervisory authorities and grantors of concessions include service quality frameworks as part of their economic oversight or within concession agreements.

For this reason, a service quality framework can be mandated by oversight authorities as part of the economic regulation of the airport or established as minimum service levels to be guaranteed during the life of a concession agreement. While the principles highlighted in this paper are applicable in those situations there are some important features that need to be considered:

- A mechanism should be established to review and modify the KPIs, targets and measurements methodologies on an ongoing basis allowing for a continuous improvement mindset to be established.
- Consultation with the airline community should be included as part of that revision and the possibility to include new KPIs to address service shortcomings identified by them or to remove KPIs that are no longer relevant e.g. that will naturally occur over a 30 or 40 years concession agreement.
- The relationship between service and cost needs to be fully analyzed before selecting targets with users' agreement.
- When there is a consistent lack of performance, supervisory authorities may consider the establishment of rebates on the fees to recognize that relationship between charges and services.
- "Bonuses" for providing higher service levels than requested by the airlines should be avoided. This will result in the perverse incentive to outperform the agreed service levels unnecessarily increasing costs for users. This can also potentially result in unintended operational consequences recognizing airport processes are integrated and finely balanced.

Supporting Documentation

- For further information regarding Service Quality Framework example KPI's and methodologies contact airportdevelopment@iata.org
- IATA Airport Infrastructure Investment – User Consultation paper