

Complaint Resolution Process (External)

Principles

We attempt to keep complaint resolution activity as close as possible to the NLC people who are involved in the situation. We believe people with first-hand knowledge of any event or series of events are likely to be best equipped to respond effectively to issues that arise. They are normally given the first opportunity to address and resolve disputes or complaints.

Our resolution process is guided by our Values and the principles within our Customer Service Charter.

We believe our customers and NLC benefit from having both informal and formal approaches to resolving complaints.

Acknowledging Complaints

NLC service standards require that we respond to all customer service inquiries/concerns within one business day.

Verbal/Informal Process

We encourage customers to bring any matters of concern immediately to the attention of an NLC team member. This informal process is reflective of our core customer-service focus, and is intended to facilitate understanding between all parties and achieve resolutions quickly. Upon being presented with a matter of concern to a customer, team members will:

- a. Listen carefully to the customer's concern, complaint, or issue
- b. Assure the customer that we are committed to resolving the issue or complaint
- c. Ensure clarification of the issue
- d. If possible, offer a workable resolution and upon agreement and feasibility, implement the solution
- e. Confirm with customer they are satisfied with the resolution. If not, the team member will refer client to the formal complaint process.

If the solution is out of the team member's control, they will redirect to the appropriate person or group and advocate where appropriate. If the "appropriate person or group" is part of NLC, they will proceed in keeping with the points a-e above.

Verbal complaints should be resolved as quickly as possible. If a resolution is not reached (or is not likely to be reached) within five working days, the written/formal process should be used in order to ensure appropriate follow-through.

It is important to capture learning that occurs through informal complaints - see **Complaint Closure** below.

Written/Formal Process

A written complaint is used in two circumstances. If no resolution to a verbal complaint is found within five working days, the resolution process requires the complaint be made in written form and signed by the complainant in order to facilitate tracking and follow up. Or, a customer may choose to provide a complaint in writing at any time, bypassing the verbal complaint stage. Complaints should be submitted on the NLC Complaint Form.

During the formal/written resolution process each step is monitored and next steps are documented to ensure understanding of all parties and facilitate follow-through.

Our **Complaint Form** is available at each NLC location upon request or it can be downloaded from our NLC website.

Process Flow

- a) The recipient of a written complaint is responsible for immediately forwarding the complaint form to either their Team Leader or the VP Quality Assurance (VP QA).
- b) A Team Leader who receives a written complaint directly or through another employee is responsible to immediately forward the complaint form to the VP QA.
- c) The VP QA will review the complaint and confirm who is responsible for follow-up (normally the Team Leader closest to the situation).
- d) The VP QA will contact the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written complaint and inform of next steps within one business day.
- e) The person responsible for addressing the complaint will guide the resolution process in accordance with the resolution stages below, and will forward status updates, and copies of action plans and all other documentation to the VP QA, who will monitor the process throughout.
- f) Upon resolution of a complaint, the responsible party will summarize the outcome and submit the summary to QA (see Complaint Closure below).
- g) Upon receipt of an outcome summary, QA will contact the customer to assess their satisfaction with the resolution and the complaint handling process.

Stage One: TEAM LEADER

Stage one is to be completed within five business days.

- a. The responsible Team Leader consults involved team members to investigate the matter and evaluate possible responses (In many cases it will be possible for this process to begin even before responsibility is formally confirmed by QA).
- b. The responsible Team Leader contacts the complainant to gather information, discuss potential remedial action, and seek feedback (Steps a. and b. must be taken within ONE BUSINESS DAY of awareness of the complaint by the responsible TL).
- c. Through open communication with all parties, the TL attempts to facilitate a mutually acceptable response to the complaint. When this is achieved, the TL

documents the details for all involved, including an action plan and timelines for anything that needs to be completed. Once an action plan has been agreed upon, no further escalation to other stages occurs, and the action plan is implemented. Closure follows completion of the action plan.

- d. If an action plan is not in place within five business days, or if it becomes apparent at any point that stage one is unlikely to result in an acceptable resolution, the process proceeds immediately to stage two and responsibility is transferred to the Divisional Coordinator.

Stage Two: DIVISIONAL COORDINATOR (DC)

Stage two is to be completed within five business days.

When the efforts from stage one have not resolved the complaint, the Divisional Coordinator:

- a. Assumes responsibility for addressing the complaint.
- b. Takes appropriate steps to resolve the situation, including assessing the situation for its implications to NLC business relationships, systems, and finances, including a scan of possible contractual obligations.
- c. When a response is agreed upon, the DC documents the details for all involved, including an action plan and timelines for anything that needs to be completed. Once an action plan has been agreed upon, no further escalation to stage three occurs, and the action plan is implemented. Closure follows completion of the action plan.
- d. If an action plan is not in place within five business days, or if it becomes apparent at any point that stage two is unlikely to result in an acceptable resolution, the process proceeds immediately to stage three and responsibility is transferred to the CEO.

Stage Three: CEO

Stage three is to be completed within five business days.

When the efforts from the first stage have not resolved the complaint, the CEO:

- a. Assumes responsibility for bringing the complaint to closure.
- b. Takes appropriate steps to resolve the situation. This could include a systemic review to strategize changes that may be needed to deal with recurring problems; or communicating any changes made to the complainant to restore a positive working relationship with the complainant as one affected by our activities.
- c. When a conclusion is reached, the CEO documents the details for all involved, including an action plan and timelines for anything that needs to be completed. Closure occurs when there is no further action to be taken.

Complaint Closure

Informal Complaints

Resolutions are documented and shared with the team and divisional coordinator if there are potential learning opportunities and/or possible systemic changes to be made. Privacy and confidentiality are respected and no personal information is provided.

Formal Complaints

- a. A formal/written complaint is closed when all action required has been taken.
- b. At the point of closure, the person responsible will consider the nature of the complaint and the resolution, and take appropriate steps to prevent future similar complaints throughout the organization.
- c. The person responsible for the complaint at the time of closure will forward a closure summary to the VP QA for tracking purposes. QA will conduct the satisfaction survey with the complainant at this point, and will capture the complaint data for tracking purposes.

Matters outside our jurisdiction

If a complaint is made to us about a matter that we do not have responsibility for or authority over, then we provide the complainant with assistance in determining how and to whom to redirect their complaint.

Complaint Reporting System

QA will use data from outcomes to improve service across NLC.

Once all personal identifying information is removed, the complaint process data will be entered into the data collection point so that statistics are accurate, and what is learned from the process is available for training and quality assurance purposes.

Evaluation

QA maintains data concerning the use of the Complaint Process. QA conducts an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Complaint Process annually, and shares the results with the entire organization.