

Research on the standardization of public services in grass-roots administrative service centers from the perspective of standardization

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ABSTRACT

Building a "service-oriented government" has become the goal of our country's administrative management system reform and the core of government function transformation. As a product of local government administrative reforms, the Administrative Service Center has gradually become an important vehicle for innovation in government management. It has achieved significant success in implementing administrative approval system reforms, promoting government transparency, enhancing administrative efficiency, and improving the economic development environment. However, the construction and development of the Administrative Service Center also face some pressing issues, mainly due to the lack of effective regulations.

KEYWORDS

administrative service center; standardization

This paper takes the standardized construction of grass-roots administrative service centers as the theme, takes the problems existing in the development of administrative service centers as the clue, and combines the practical cases of Shangcheng District government of Hangzhou in the management of standardized public services to make an overall analysis of the standardized construction of administrative service centers in China.

1 The relevant theory of standardization of public services in administrative service centers

1.1 Administrative Service Centre

The development of administrative service centers has evolved from single-function administrative approval services to centralized administrative approval services, and then to diversified public services. Administrative service centers represent an innovation in the model of public services by local governments, actively responding to the construction of a "service-oriented government." Therefore, it can be defined that the essence of administrative service centers is "a new type of administrative service institution that, guided by the concept of a service-oriented government, provides integrated services to citizens or organizations through centralized government function organization methods and advanced service means."^[1]

1.2 Standardization of public services in administrative service centers

We can define the meaning of standardizing public services in administrative service centers as follows: on the basis of the existing service operation model of administrative service centers, introduce the concepts and methods of standardized enterprise management into the public services provided by these centers. This involves establishing a standardized system for public services, setting clear quality goals, standardizing service methods, optimizing service procedures, ensuring that there is standard guidance in areas such as window construction, service content, and service processes, thereby achieving standardized operations throughout the entire administrative service center, thus improving the quality and efficiency of government services.^[2] As an important vehicle for building a service-oriented government in China, the development of administrative service centers has deviated from its intended path due to the lack of standardized institutional frameworks.

Standardizing public services in administrative service centers helps further clarify the functional authority of service windows, standardize the operational mechanisms and management systems of the center. From the perspective of national and societal requirements for building a service-oriented government, it is necessary to reasonably set the services provided by administrative service centers.

At the same time, standardizing public services in administrative service centers can ensure the public's right to know and supervise, effectively limit discretionary power in public services, promote standardization through supervision, and improve through external evaluation.

The service performance of the administrative service center is that the unit leaders and window staff can do things according to the standards, so as to better meet the needs of enterprises and the public.

2 Problems existing in the construction of administrative service center

2.1 The administrative service center is not clearly positioned

Currently, the nature of administrative service centers can be described as "diverse," encompassing government-affiliated institutions, dispatched government agencies, temporary permanent government bodies, public institutions, and those managed in accordance with public administration. The lack of a clear definition for the nature of administrative service centers hinders their standardized development. This leads to various establishment methods, scope of authority, and management models, directly resulting in chaotic management. In terms of the development status of administrative service centers in China, there is generally an issue of overly narrow functional positioning.

The construction of administrative service centers in our country can be roughly divided into three levels: consultation centers, proxy service centers, and processing centers. The primary function of the "consultation center" is to help the public clarify their direction for handling affairs; the main role of the "proxy service center" is to coordinate various activities of resident departments during the approval process; the primary function of the "processing center" is to independently handle approval projects, achieving true "one-stop" services. In terms of the development status of administrative service centers in our country, most are at the level of "proxy service centers," while some administrative service centers have attempted to expand their authority in approvals, falling between the levels of "proxy service centers" and "processing centers."

2.2 The management system in administrative services is not perfect

Since there is no model to learn from in the development process of China's administrative service center, it not only provides a broad space for innovation of the administrative service center, but also brings about an imperfect management system.

First, the administrative service center windows exhibit "uneven heat and cold." This is mainly reflected in the varying levels of "visitor flow" due to different business handled by various functional departments, causing staff at different service windows to be in either a "busy" or "idle" state. The unclear positioning of the administrative service center leads to a lack of necessary regulatory capabilities, turning the "center" into a "property management department." Looking at administrative service centers across the country, the one-sided selection of service items results in an uneven distribution of "hot and cold" situations, becoming a common issue hindering the development of service centers nationwide. For example, the window for the Administration for Industry and Commerce and the public security window have become popular, while windows like those of the Technical Supervision Bureau remain unpopular.

Secondly, the administrative service center lacks personnel management authority. If the administrative service center cannot effectively manage its staff, various rules and regulations will struggle to function properly, making it difficult to establish a genuine "service-oriented government." A Xinhua News Agency reporter found during an investigation at a government center that "the phenomenon of on-duty personnel leaving their posts or moving between positions is very serious, with many windows simply staging an empty city scenario..."^[3] The primary reason for this situation is that the administrative service center does not have personnel management authority. Since the window staff come from the units they serve, their personnel, salaries, and benefits are managed by these units. The administrative service center neither manages the salaries nor handles personnel matters for the window staff; it only focuses on daily attendance, discipline, and business coordination.^[4] Due to the inability of the administrative service center to effectively manage the window staff, it is also difficult to regulate and standardize their behavior, leaving the public unable to receive effective services.

2.3 Lack of reasonable and effective operation mechanism

First, the joint processing mechanism is not smooth. The purpose of establishing administrative service centers is to improve service quality and efficiency through collaboration among various functional departments. The provision of public goods and services requires good cooperation between government functional departments, complementing each other to form an integrated government that considers interest groups in administrative decision-making, ensures smooth execution, and provides rapid and comprehensive feedback^[5]. However, during the parallel approval process at administrative service centers, various government functional departments delay or postpone tasks for various reasons, leading to poor operation of the joint processing mechanism and significantly reducing service efficiency and quality.

Secondly, there is the issue of "two-way processing." Some functional departments have approval windows set up in administrative service centers. After businesses and the public complete their approvals at these center windows, they still need to go back to their original units for further approval. Other functional departments only set up consultation and document collection windows at administrative service centers, which dilutes the functions of these centers and increases the costs for businesses and the public.

3 Practice of standardization construction of government management and public service in Shangcheng District, Hangzhou city

In 2007, the Shangcheng District Government of Hangzhou City initiated the standardization of public services in the fields of public management and public services. Based on a thorough review of specific functions in government management and public services, the Shangcheng District Government introduced the concept of "standardized enterprise management" into government departments. By organizing relevant laws, regulations, and policy documents, combining grassroots management and service practices, and drawing on the practical experience of ISO9000 quality management systems in government departments, they standardized the content and procedures of management and service projects through standards. From the beginning, Shangcheng District focused on building an information platform as a carrier to promote the standardization of public services. Using Shangcheng District as a model, they improved the standardized service system and information disclosure mechanism, establishing a management and service standard information query platform and an online service platform^[6]. Leveraging this information platform, the Shangcheng District Civil Affairs Bureau achieved "one-stop" services for community affairs management, marriage and adoption registration, home-based elderly care services, and approval work for disadvantaged families.

Shangcheng District in Hangzhou has significantly improved the effectiveness of government management and services through the construction of "one-stop" services. The electronic government service model, which is part of this "one-stop" initiative, holds significant importance for the development of administrative service centers. Internally, it can optimize organizational structures and integrate business processes, thereby enhancing internal service efficiency. Externally, "one-stop" services effectively distribute the workload of the administrative service center, addressing the issue of unevenly distributed window services to some extent. This not only facilitates public convenience but also boosts the overall service efficiency of the administrative service center. Therefore, it is essential for the administrative service center to fully leverage the important role of its website in providing "one-stop" services, thus improving the efficiency of public services.

4 An effective way to solve the problems existing in the construction of administrative service center

By drawing on the practice of standardized construction of government management and public service in Shangcheng District, Hangzhou city, it is suggested that the standardized construction of public service in administrative service center can be considered from four aspects: standardization of administrative service center management, standardization of administrative service center service work, standardization of performance evaluation of administrative service center, and construction of "one-stop" e-government.

4.1 Standardization of administrative service center management

The standardization of administrative service center management refers to the standards established for internal management matters of the administrative service center. It primarily addresses management issues that arise during the development of the administrative service center. By setting management standards, it aims to enhance the management authority of the administrative service center^[7]. Standards are used to regulate the management of staff salaries, benefits, rewards, and punishments within the administrative service center. Standards also define the centers rules and regulations, such as service standards, reward and punishment criteria, and performance evaluation standards, forming a comprehensive set of standard regulations.

4.2 Standardization of service work in administrative service centers

The standardization of service work in administrative service centers refers to the job responsibilities and service standards set for staff at all levels. By clearly defining the roles of position leaders, managers, and workers, it aims to prevent buck-passing and provide high-quality, efficient services to the public. The establishment of standardized service work in administrative service centers breaks through the influence of traditional management thinking and departmental interest mindsets on staff, which is of great significance for the construction and development of administrative service centers.

4.3 Standardization of performance evaluation in administrative service centers

The standardization of performance evaluation in administrative service centers is a set of criteria established to effectively manage staff and continuously improve services. The results of performance evaluations largely influence promotions, rewards, and punishments for employees. Traditional evaluation methods were confined within the

institution, excluding the public from the assessment system, leading to the bizarre phenomenon of working solely to satisfy leaders. Standardized performance evaluation involves comprehensive and effective assessments of staff both internally and externally within the administrative service center. This standard ensures that employees not only meet leadership expectations but also satisfy the public, prompting them to change their service attitudes and work styles, thereby enhancing the quality and efficiency of services provided by the administrative service center and increasing public satisfaction, ultimately achieving sustainable and healthy development of the administrative service center.

4.4 Build "one-stop" e-government

"One-stop" e-government is a new model of government service built on network information platforms. Its development includes three aspects: government transparency, online services, and citizen participation. Government transparency is a crucial tool for building a "sunshine government." It satisfies citizens' right to know and serves as a significant driving force for improving decision-making and administrative efficiency. Online services leverage network platforms to integrate relevant business processes, providing the public with "no need to leave home" online services. This avoids the public having to travel between various government departments, making it more convenient while also enhancing service efficiency and reducing costs. Citizen participation ensures effective involvement in public affairs management and supervision of government actions, thereby encouraging the government to fully consider public opinion during decision-making and service delivery. Afterward, the government can accept public evaluation, improve service methods, and enhance service quality.

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