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How Services Actually Work

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Following the service across governmental boundaries

The short story

The [fictional facility repair](#) from Module 1 now raises a service question: who manages the work, who performs it and who pays? A single project can have different answers for each role.

This module focuses on questions 3-8 of the master checklist, while keeping the location and issue visible. Decision authority means who may decide; the actor is who actually acted. Funding alone does not answer either question.

A service has several parts

For this guide, describe a service through four questions: Who provides it? Who pays? Who has authority over the relevant decision? Who holds the records? Keep the service area and legal authority alongside those answers. This is CLOCK's teaching method, not an official routing system.

PROVIDER	Who performs the service?
FUNDING	Where does the money come from?
DECISION AUTHORITY	Who may make this decision?
RECORDS	Which agency holds the supporting record?

Read the arrangement, not just the name

Georgia's Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) rules define a strategy as forms, geographic information, agreements, contracts and supporting materials. Form 2 addresses providers, territories, funding and implementing arrangements. These fields help separate the roles. [\[1\]](#)

Different arrangements need different questions

The descriptions below are reading aids. They do not assign a particular local service without supporting records.

Countywide, municipal and unincorporated-area

Countywide describes a reach across the county, including its cities and unincorporated territory. Ask whether one provider or several deliver the service. For a municipal service, identify the particular city and the actual service boundary. For an unincorporated-area service, check the area outside city limits and any exceptions. These questions follow the service-area distinctions used in SDS forms. [\[3\]](#)

Split service areas

If a record divides an area among providers, identify each part separately. A statement about one zone should not become a statement about every address. Read the legend and distinguish existing coverage from planned coverage. Georgia's mapping rules require the service map and its associated forms to agree. [\[1\]](#)

Cooperative or intergovernmental arrangements

Ask what each participant agreed to do: operate, finance, maintain, supervise or provide a facility. Locate the signed arrangement, amendments and effective period. Do not assume the participant receiving a payment made every decision. This is a document-reading checklist, informed by the agreement materials included in an SDS. [\[1\]](#)

Authorities and third-party providers

DCA describes authorities as separate entities for public purposes, with differing creation methods and dependent or independent relationships. Read the specific authority's governing documents. [\[7\]](#)

For a contracted provider, identify the contracting government, operator, scope, funding and oversight provisions. A contractor's role should be established from the actual contract. Likewise, an organization receiving public money should not be described as a government department merely because it receives that money.

Connection does not automatically mean control. Identify the power to make the particular decision.

Local examples: what the records establish

The latest entry located on DCA's Applying index is the 2022 strategy. The following strategy examples describe that dated document. I cannot confirm that every arrangement remains unchanged today. [\[2\]](#)

BAXLEY | A service boundary can cross city limits

The 2022 strategy describes Baxley sewer service inside and outside city limits (PDF p. 11). [\[3\]](#) Baxley's posted rate table also separates inside-city and outside-city customers for water and sewer (PDF p. 1). [\[4\]](#)

Teaching point: municipal boundaries and utility service areas should be checked separately. These sources do not establish availability at any particular address, and this article does not certify today's rates.

GRAHAM / SURRENCY | Verify each city separately

The 2022 water section names Baxley, Graham and Surrency and refers to existing and future mapped areas (PDF pp. 13-14). [\[3\]](#) Graham's municipal website describes its water service. [\[5\]](#)

Teaching point: a planned area is not proof of an active connection. Graham's website also cannot establish Surrency's current operating terms. Current Surrency service boundaries and terms remain unconfirmed in this review.

APPLING COUNTY / SHARED | Follow the specific facility

The 2022 parks section allocates operation and maintenance using separate County and city park lists (PDF pp. 7-8). [3] The County Recreation Department's facilities page lists several facilities, including its recreation complex and aquatic center. [6]

Teaching point: identify the particular park or facility, then verify the present owner, operator, maintenance assignment and funding. A facility list alone does not answer all four questions.

SHARED / AUTHORITY | Programs can involve other organizations

The 2022 youth section names County government, Boys & Girls Club and Headstart/Action Pact (PDF p. 18). [3]

Teaching point: examine each participant's role and the actual program agreement. A joint listing does not establish a chain of command.

Trace funding without skipping a step

For a service question, ask whether the record concerns routine operations, a capital project, a grant, debt, or a transfer. Use that distinction as a research question rather than assuming the answer. A rate schedule answers a different question from an adopted budget or payment record.

CLOCK's suggested record sequence is: identify the authorized funding source; find the appropriation or contract; locate payment records; then look for the record of the work or service delivered. Not every transaction uses the same documents. Record what each source actually establishes.

Identify the decision that matters

"Who has authority over this decision?" is too broad until the decision is named. Are you asking who sets a rate, approves a project, directs daily work, maintains an asset, selects a contractor or ends an agreement? Look for the clause or governing provision that addresses that decision.

Follow records to the responsible agencies

The Georgia Attorney General advises directing requests to the agency's records custodian and recommends making requests in writing. [8] For a shared project, make a separate list of records sought from each relevant agency. Do not assume one office holds everything.

Provider, funder, decision-maker and records custodian may be the same entity. Establish each role before combining them.

When sources do not give the same answer

Keep the sources, dates and scopes visible. Ask whether they describe different periods or different parts of a service. Do not silently pick one source or accuse an entity of wrongdoing from an unresolved difference. State the question and identify the record needed to answer it.

Use VERIFY JURISDICTION when responsibility remains unresolved. Use SHARED / AUTHORITY when evidence establishes multiple participants, explaining their individual roles. APPLING COUNTY, BAXLEY, GRAHAM and SURENCY remain the labels for issues primarily involving those governments.

Try the method on one service

Choose a particular service and location. Complete the following record card; leave unsupported answers open.

- Service and location: Name the exact service, component and area.
- Period: Record when the arrangement applies.
- Authority and actor: Identify the governing provision and who acted.
- Provider: Name the operator and cite the record.
- Funding: Name each source; separate transfers if relevant.
- Decision authority: Name the decision and who can make it.
- Records: Identify the agency for each record sought.
- Evidence and gaps: List source, date, page/clause and open question.

Worked example: complete the service card

Use the same fictional records F1-F5. These entries are invented learning facts, not local service assignments.

Field	Completed answer
Service and area	Repair at the City B facility identified in F1.
Provider and manager	Contractor performs repairs under F4; City B manages the project under F2.
Decision authority and actor	F1 gives council repair authority; F3 records council's allocation and amendment.
Funding	F2 assigns \$40,000 to County A and \$80,000 to City B.
Records	City B: contract, inspections and payments. County A: contribution approval and transfer records (F2).
Gap	No completion record was supplied (F5); completion is unconfirmed.

For a real service, also record the agreement's dates and period of operation. Do not treat a historic service listing as confirmation of present terms.

What a supported explanation sounds like

“For [service] in [area] during [period], [source and locator] assigns [role] to [entity]. [Second source] establishes [funding or decision]. [Remaining issue] is not yet confirmed.” This is a writing template; its blanks are not factual assertions.

Next: Citizen Toolkit

Module 3 turns these findings into practical next steps: identifying the meeting, reading the agenda, contacting the right office, seeking records and documenting what happened. Module 4 follows public money in greater depth.

Find the next record

Use the [source-finding guide](#) for document types, official starting points and unresolved local source limits.

Sources and scope

Reviewed September 27, 2026. This guide teaches how to investigate service arrangements. Dated examples remain dated; it is not a complete current service directory. Individual contracts, current operational boundaries, charters and funding records have not all been reconciled.

1. [Georgia service-delivery rules](#). Rules .01(1), .02(2), .03 and .04: effective January 1, 2026; strategy contents, mapping and forms. Not a determination of Applying compliance.
2. [DCA Applying strategy index](#). Latest listed entry located: 2022. Reviewed September 27, 2026. Listing is not proof that all later records are posted.
3. [2022 Applying County Service Delivery Strategy](#). PDF pp. 3-5 fire; 6-9 parks; 10-12 sewer; 13-17 water; 18-20 youth. Dated examples; current continuation not independently confirmed.
4. [City of Baxley posted utility rate tables](#). PDF p. 1, inside/outside city columns. Filename says FY2025; upload path says 2026/02. Neither alone proves present effective rates. No dollar amounts are asserted here.
5. [City of Graham, Georgia: Water Utilities](#). Municipal service description; accessed during this review. No effective date or complete operating-area map established from this page.
6. [Applying County Recreation Department: Facilities](#). Department facility listing. Used only for what the department lists, not as proof of title, contract terms or complete jurisdiction.
7. [DCA: Local Government Authorities](#). Overview, Method of Creation and Authority Operations. Separate public-purpose entities with varying relationships.
8. [Georgia Attorney General: Records requests](#). Guidance on records custodians and written requests.