STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Managing New Client Requests

From first inquiry to confirmed appointment and accurate handoff

DOCUMENT CONTROL	DETAIL
Procedure ID	OPS-014
Version / effective date	1.0	02 November 2026
Process owner	Client Services Lead
Applies to	Front desk, intake coordinators, scheduling team
Review cycle	Every 12 months or after a major process change

01 Purpose

To ensure every incoming client request is acknowledged, screened, documented, scheduled (when appropriate), and passed to the correct team member using one consistent, easy-to-follow process.

02 Important information

Before you begin This is an illustrative procedure for a fictional administrative-services business. The system names, turnaround targets, and approval rules below are examples—not legal or regulatory requirements.

YOU WILL NEED	WHERE TO FIND IT
Client Intake Tracker	Shared Drive → Operations → Client Intake → Current Tracker
Scheduling calendar	Team Calendar → Client Appointments
Approved response templates	Shared Drive → Templates → Client Communications
Service eligibility list	Operations Playbook → Appendix A

03 Service targets

ACTIVITY	INTERNAL TARGET	ACCOUNTABLE
Acknowledge inquiry	Within 1 business day	Intake coordinator
Complete initial screening	Within 2 business days of receiving required details	Intake coordinator
Escalate urgent issue	Immediately during business hours	Client Services Lead
Record handoff	Same day as appointment confirmation	Intake coordinator

04 Procedure | Standard workflow

Follow the steps in sequence. If the request meets one of the special scenarios on page 3, apply that scenario before advancing.

01 Receive and identify the inquiry

Open the email, web form, or call log. Identify the client's name, contact details, requested service, preferred date, and any deadline. Do not assume missing information.

02 Check for an existing record

Search the Client Intake Tracker by email first, then by client name. If a record exists, compare the request details and update that entry rather than creating a duplicate.

03 Create or update the tracker entry

Enter Date Received, Client Name, Contact Method, Service Requested, Owner, Status, and Next Action Date. Use "New – Screening" until the inquiry has been checked.

04 Confirm service fit

Check the approved Service Eligibility List. If service fit is unclear, set Status to "Pending Review" and send the details to the Client Services Lead; do not promise availability.

05 Send the appropriate response

Use the approved template. Confirm receipt, request only the missing information needed for scheduling, and explain the next step. Record the message date in the tracker.

06 Offer an available appointment

Review the shared calendar and offer two available times. Confirm the appropriate appointment type and assigned team member. Never offer a blocked or tentative slot.

07 Confirm and document

Once the client accepts, book the appointment. Send the confirmation template and update the tracker to "Booked", including date, time, owner, and confirmation sent date.

08 Complete the handoff

Provide the assigned team member with the request summary, missing items, agreed next steps, and link to the tracker record. Mark "Handoff Complete" only when all required fields are present.

Quality checkpoint Before moving a request to "Booked", verify that the client, service, date/time, assigned owner, and confirmation details match across the tracker and calendar.

05 Required tracker fields

FIELD	ENTRY EXAMPLE	RULE
Status	Waiting for Client	Use an approved status only
Next Action Date	05 Nov 2026	Mandatory for every open inquiry
Request Summary	Monthly bookkeeping inquiry	Concise; no unnecessary personal details
Assigned Owner	Client Services Lead	Must match the calendar appointment owner

06 Scenario decision guide

Use this table to determine what to do when the standard workflow cannot continue. Every exception must have a documented next action.

IF THIS HAPPENS…	TAKE THIS ACTION	TRACKER STATUS / NEXT STEP
Client record already exists	Open the existing record; compare contact details and update the latest request. Alert the owner if a duplicate was created.	Existing record updated; note “Repeat Inquiry”.
Required details are missing	Send the “More Information Needed” template with a specific list of outstanding details. Do not book yet.	Waiting for Client; follow up in 2 business days.
Requested service is outside scope	Do not commit to providing the service. Notify the Client Services Lead and send an approved decline/referral response.	Not a Fit; record reason category.
Preferred appointment time is unavailable	Offer two alternate openings from the live calendar. Do not hold a slot unless allowed by policy.	Scheduling in Progress; set follow-up date.
Client says matter is urgent	Record the stated deadline and notify the Client Services Lead promptly. Do not guarantee expedited service.	Urgent – Review; owner and next action mandatory.
Two employees respond to same inquiry	Identify the record owner, stop duplicate outreach, and agree on one point of contact.	Retain one master record; document correction.
Client cancels before appointment	Remove or update the calendar entry; confirm cancellation and ask whether rescheduling is wanted.	Cancelled or Reschedule Requested.

07 Communication guide

SITUATION	SUGGESTED MESSAGE
Acknowledgment	“Thanks for reaching out. We’ve received your request and will review the details before confirming next steps.”
Missing information	“To help us move forward, could you please confirm [specific details]? Once received, we can continue reviewing your request.”
Alternative scheduling	“That time is unavailable, but we currently have [option 1] or [option 2]. Would either work for you?”

08 Exceptions & special circumstances

01 No response after follow-up

If the client has not replied after the first follow-up, send one final reminder after 3 additional business days. If there is still no response after a further 5 business days, set the record to “Closed – No Response”. Reopen if the client later replies.

02 Incorrect or conflicting information

Pause scheduling. Compare the record with the latest client communication. Ask the client to confirm conflicting details; document the correction and date. Escalate if the conflict affects service eligibility.

03 Sensitive information received unexpectedly

Do not copy sensitive documents into the tracker or forward them broadly. Follow the organization’s approved secure-handling process and notify the appropriate owner if unsure.

04 System or calendar unavailable

Record the inquiry in the approved temporary intake log. Acknowledge receipt without confirming an appointment. Transfer data into the main tracker when service returns and verify no duplicate was created.

09 Completion & final review

Before marking the request complete, verify each item below:

☐ Client contact information is accurate and necessary fields are complete.

☐ Existing-record search has been completed; no duplicate remains.

☐ Service suitability is confirmed or appropriately escalated.

☐ Appointment details match the tracker, calendar, and client confirmation.

☐ Assigned team member has the summary and required next actions.

☐ Final status and next action date are recorded correctly.

10 Quick-reference status glossary

STATUS	MEANING	WHO ACTS NEXT
New – Screening	Inquiry received; initial review not finished	Intake coordinator
Waiting for Client	More details requested	Client, then coordinator
Pending Review	Lead decision required	Client Services Lead
Scheduling in Progress	Suitable request; appointment not finalized	Intake coordinator
Booked	Confirmed and documented	Assigned team member
Closed – No Response	Follow-up cycle completed	No action until re-contact

Document design note This is a fictional portfolio example demonstrating structured steps, practical exception handling, consistent status language, and scannable decision tables. Adapt all policies and turnaround targets before using in a live organization.