Performance Audit of the City's Get It Done Application and Service Requests Management

Why OCA did this study

To bridge the gap between the City and residents, the City has various customer service portals and intake channels for residents to report problems to the City pertaining to its assets or to request information about City services. In 2021, the City's various customer service portals fielded nearly one million telephone calls and approximately 296,000 service requests submitted through the Get It Done mobile app and web portal. This works out to an average of approximately 3,300 inquiries and service requests daily, seven days a week.

The development of Get It Done is one of the City's efforts to improve customer service and has streamlined intake for a variety of service requests. In addition to Get It Done, the City has many other decentralized customer service portals and intake channels for residents to report problems or request information about City services.

Prior reports have recommended that the City move toward establishing a centralized customer service center.

Our audit included the following objectives:
1) Determine how efforts to strengthen customer communications may be used to improve overall satisfaction; and
2) Determine whether consolidating customer service portals could improve the City's customer service experience.

What OCA found

Finding 1: While Get It Done has greatly expanded customers' access to request services, many customers receive limited, confusing, or inaccurate information about their service requests.

Get It Done is a useful tool that many customers use to access or request City services. However, we found that Get It Done sometimes provides customers with limited confusing, inaccurate, misleading, or information about their service requests, which likely impacts customer satisfaction.

We found that the City can improve the completeness, accuracy, and clarity of the information provided to customers by:

- Setting and communicating clear goals and estimates for service request completion times. For example, we found that Get It Done does not consistently inform customers of target completion times and estimated completion times for the six most common service requests.

- Providing progress updates on service requests where **appropriate**, and clarifying communications to customers when a request is outside the jurisdiction of the City.

- Providing accurate closure detail to customers. For example, Get It Done provided accurate case closure details to customers in approximately 81 percent of the cases and inaccurate or misleading closure details in 19 percent—or nearly 1 in 5 customers—of the cases we reviewed.

We found that customers are not satisfied with the report closure details provided in Get It Done, and this is also an issue that elected officials are particularly concerned about. Thus, the City should continue to improve Get It Done as a key tool for providing high-quality customer service to the public.

Exhibit 5: The current process for service requests submitted through the Get It Done mobile app and web portal does not communicate target and estimated completion times, does not provide progress updates, and provides inaccurate closure details to some customers
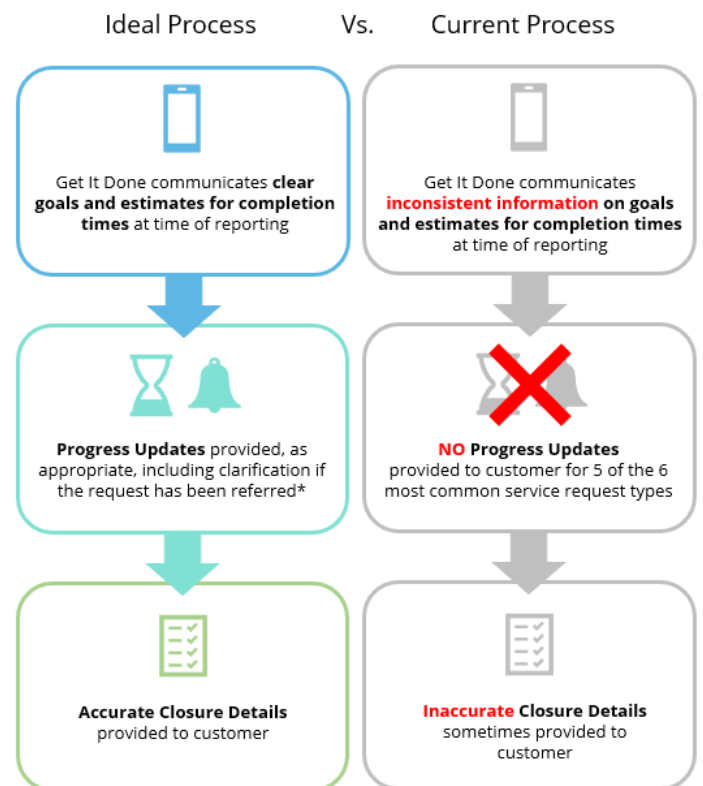
*The Progress Update language should reflect that referred cases have been referred and not closed. For these cases, no additional Progress Updates are provided.

Source: Auditor generated based on review of the City's Fiscal Year 2023 Adopted Budget; Get It Done mobile app and web portal; and interviews with City departments.

Finding 2: A centralized, 3-1-1 phone-based intake option could improve the customer service experience, increase equity and access to City services, and decrease SDPD's call volume and wait times.

Get It Done provides a single point of contact opportunity for the public to communicate issues to the City. However, it is not the City's sole customer service portal, as some departments have their own customer service center or portal for customers to report problems. In 2021, the City received nearly one million calls through various decentralized customer service portals, and the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) non-emergency line had the highest number of calls received. In addition to these department-managed customer service centers and portals, residents also use various other decentralized methods to report problems to the City, including by emailing the City and by contacting City Council Offices.

Centralized, phone-based customer service portals can improve customers' experience, and the vast majority of the most populous cities in the United States and California have a 3-1-1 phone contact option. However, although previous reports have recommended that the City centralize customer service using the 3-1-1 phone number, San Diego remains the largest city in California and the second-largest city in the United States that does not provide a 3-1-1 phone option for residents.

The continued lack of a centralized, phone-based intake option likely makes it more difficult for some residents to contact the City, such as residents with technical barriers or those with limited English proficiency. In addition to increasing equity and access for these residents, a 3-1-1 phone intake option could also divert calls from SDPD's non-emergency line, which would help decrease SDPD's call volume and wait times.

Exhibit 16: Most of the largest cities in the United States and California have a 3-1-1 style contact option

Most Populous Cities in the United States			Most Populous Cities in California	
Municipality	**3-1-1 Contact Option?**		**Municipality**	**3-1-1 Contact Option?**
1. New York	✓		1. Los Angeles	✓
2. Los Angeles	✓		2. San Diego	✗
3. Chicago	✓		3. San Jose	✓
4. Houston	✓		4. San Francisco	✓
5. Phoenix	✗		5. Fresno	✓
6. Philadelphia	✓		6. Sacramento	✓
7. San Antonio	✓		7. Long Beach	✗
8. San Diego	✗		8. Oakland	✓
9. Dallas	✓		9. Bakersfield	✗
10. San Jose	✓		10. Anaheim	✓

Source: Auditor generated using municipal website data.

Other Pertinent Information: The City is not meeting current demand for many types of service requests; continued process improvements and additional resources are likely needed to address service requests submitted through Get It Done and a future 3-1-1 contact option.

As discussed in Finding 1, enhancements to Get It Done may help improve customer satisfaction. In addition, as discussed in Finding 2, the City should establish a 3-1-1 contact option to improve its customer service, expand access, and likely decrease call volume to SDPD. While these improvements are necessary, continued improvements in efficiencies, along with additional resources, are likely needed to address service requests submitted through the existing Get It Done platform and a future 3-1-1 contact option.

According to PandA and City officials we spoke with, an increase in service requests is partially responsible for the lowered customer satisfaction scores, as resource deficiencies to address these service requests in a timely manner impact customers' satisfaction.

While total operational capacity was not the subject of the audit, from 2018 through 2021, the number of service requests submitted through the Get It Done web portal and mobile app approximately doubled—increasing from 148,946 to 296,209 respectively; during the same period, customers' satisfaction with Get It Done decreased from 3.4 to 3.1 on a scale from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

What OCA recommends

We make 6 recommendations to address the issues outlined throughout the report. Key recommendation elements are to:

- Include estimated and target completion times in the Get It Done report submission screen;

- Review, identify, and prioritize which services could feasibly include progress updates, and articulate a plan and timeline for providing progress updates to customers for these service requests

- Revise the response language to customer to not use the term "Closed" if a case has merely been referred;

- Provide updated training to staff that includes using the appropriate communication code for communicating case resolution to customers;

- Develop policies and procedures for supervisory review of service requests and communication codes; and

- Establish a centralized 3-1-1 contact option for residents.

City management agreed with 5 of the 6 recommendations. Management disagreed with the recommendation to establish a 3-1-1 contact option for residents. We included comments on the response at the end of the report.

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