

City of Austin



**A Report to the
Austin City Council**

Mayor
Lee Leffingwell

Mayor Pro Tem
Sheryl Cole

Council Members
Chris Riley
Mike Martinez
Kathie Tovo
Laura Morrison
Bill Spelman

**Office of the
City Auditor**

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FOLLOW-UP AUDIT REPORT

Follow-Up Audit of 311 Customer Service Initiative

June 2013



REPORT SUMMARY

We found that Austin 311 management has implemented all five recommendations from the original audit, resulting in improved management and coordination of Service Requests.

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GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS COMPLIANCE

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

AUDIT TEAM

Niki Raggi, CGAP, CICA, Assistant City Auditor
Andrew Keegan, CIA, CGAP, Auditor-in-Charge
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June 2013



Audit Report Highlights

Why We Did This Audit

This audit was conducted as part of the Office of the City Auditor's (OCA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 Strategic Audit Plan.

What We Recommended

We did not issue any additional recommendations.



For more information on this or any of our reports, email oca_auditor@austintexas.gov

FOLLOW-UP AUDIT OF 311 CUSTOMER SERVICE INITIATIVE

Mayor and Council,

I am pleased to present this follow-up audit on the 311 Customer Service Initiative.

BACKGROUND

Austin 311 is managed by Austin Energy as part of the Customer Care division. The 311 service allows citizens to get information about City programs and services, log complaints or compliments about City employees, or file requests for service, such as street repairs or trash collection.

In May 2010, the OCA issued a 311 Customer Service Initiative Audit. The report included five recommendations to standardize procedures, develop system interfaces, improve oversight and coordination, and create procedures to ensure Service Requests (SRs) were consistently handled timely and accurately.

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The objective of the audit was to follow up on recommendations from the 311 Customer Service Initiative Audit issued May 25, 2010.

The audit scope included actions taken by Austin 311 Management between June 2010 and March 2013.

WHAT WE FOUND

We found that Austin 311 management has implemented all five recommendations from the original audit, resulting in improved management and coordination of Service Requests.

Recommendation Summary	Last Status Reported by Management	Status Verified by Auditors
1. Establish and share guidelines for updating SRs	Implemented	Implemented
2. Develop standard definitions for SR status options	Implemented	Implemented
3. Work with Communication and Technology Management and City departments to initiate automated interfaces between 311 system other systems	Implemented	Implemented
4. Establish accountability and coordination mechanisms	Implemented	Implemented
5. Develop controls and procedures to ensure SRs are addressed timely and accurately	Implemented	Implemented

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance we received from the staff of the Customer Care Division of Austin Energy during this audit.


Kenneth J. Mory, City Auditor

BACKGROUND

Austin 311 is managed by Austin Energy as part of the Customer Care division. It allows citizens to get information about City programs and services, log complaints or compliments about City employees, or file requests for service, such as street repairs or trash collection.

In May 2010, the Office of the City Auditor issued the 311 Customer Service Initiative Audit. The report included five recommendations to standardize procedures, develop system interfaces, improve oversight and coordination, and create procedures to ensure Service Requests (SRs) were handled timely and accurately.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The 311 Customer Service Initiative Follow-Up Audit was conducted as part of the OCA Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 Strategic Audit Plan, as presented to the City Council Audit and Finance Committee.

Objective

The objective of the audit was to follow up on recommendations from the 311 Customer Service Initiative Audit issued on May 25, 2010.

Scope

The audit scope included actions taken by Austin 311 management from June 2010 through March 2013 to address the recommendations made in the original audit.

Methodology

To accomplish our audit objectives, we performed the following steps:

- Interviewed key personnel in Austin 311 and Austin Energy
- Reviewed documentation supporting implementation of the audit recommendations
- Tested a sample of 30 SRs created in FY 2013 to confirm they were addressed within established timeframes
- Conducted a phone survey of Austin 311 department contacts for departments with frequently opened SRs to confirm whether procedures were in place to hold departments accountable for the resolution of SRs
- Considered risk of fraud, waste, and abuse
- Considered information technology risks

AUDIT RESULTS

Finding: Austin 311 management has implemented all five recommendations from the original audit report.

We verified that all five recommendations have been implemented. Exhibit 1 provides a summary of the recommendation, the implementation status as reported by management, and the status as verified.

EXHIBIT 1
Implementation Status of Recommendations

Recommendation Summary	Last Status Reported by Management	Status Verified by Auditors
1. Establish and share guidelines for updating Service Requests (SRs)	Implemented	Implemented
2. Develop standard definitions for SR status options and periodically review department practices for alignment with definitions	Implemented	Implemented
3. Work with Communication and Technology Management (CTM) and City departments to initiate automated interfaces between 311 system and other systems	Implemented	Implemented ¹
4. Establish accountability and coordination mechanisms, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Designating a 311 liaison in the City Manager's Office b. Designating department liaisons for 311 matters c. Establish a forum for liaisons to discuss 311 matters d. Institute performance measures 	Implemented (a-d)	Implemented (a-d)
5. Develop interdepartmental controls and procedures to ensure SRs are addressed timely and accurately	Implemented	Implemented

SOURCE: OCA analysis of original audit recommendations, May 2013

Actions taken by Austin 311 management to implement the recommendations include:

- establishing guidelines for updating SRs and providing training to departments to help ensure SR activities have clearly defined durations, outcomes, and statuses;
- adopting standard definitions for SR status and ensuring standard statuses are used through a drop down menu in the Austin 311 system;
- working with CTM to determine an efficient and effective way to connect various department systems;
- establishing a 311 Steering Committee made up of liaisons from City departments and the City Manager's Office, which meets regularly to coordinate and standardize Austin 311 procedures across City departments; and

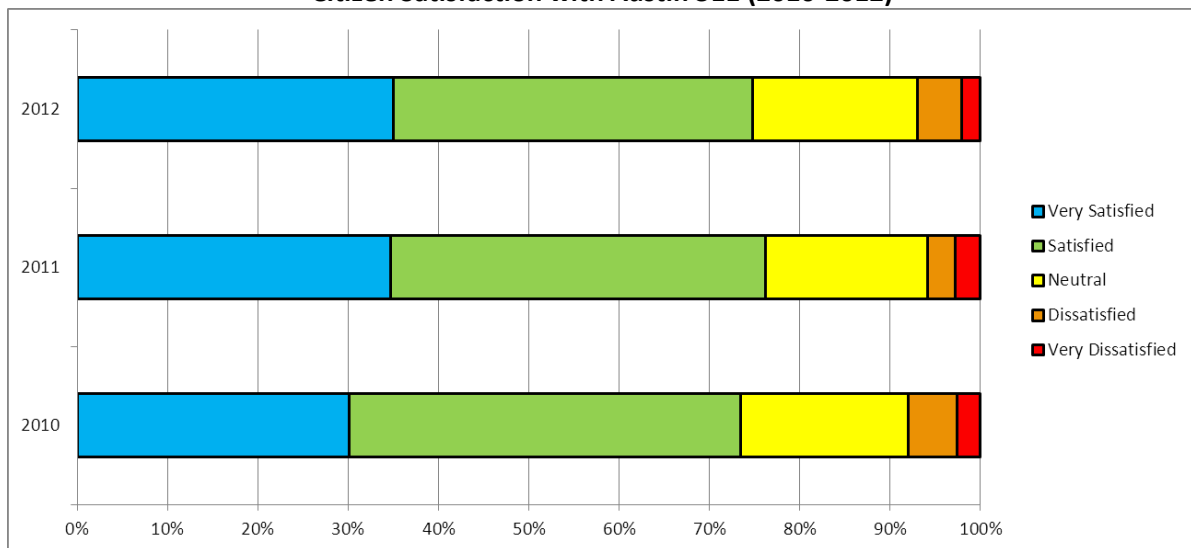
¹This recommendation has technically been implemented because 311 has worked with CTM to develop an interface. However, the outcome is dependent on a CTM initiative, which is projected to be complete in 2014.

- developing controls and procedures for timely resolution of SRs, including establishing completion times for the majority of SRs and making performance reports available to departments.

Additional Observation: According to the annual Austin Citizen Survey, Austin 311 maintains a high level of customer satisfaction.

Austin citizens were asked to rate their satisfaction with the services provided by Austin 311 in 2010, 2011, and 2012. Each year, approximately 75% of citizens reported that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the Austin 311 service and less than 8% reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The survey results are detailed in Exhibit 2.

**EXHIBIT 2
Citizen Satisfaction with Austin 311 (2010-2012)**



SOURCE: OCA analysis of Austin Citizen Surveys conducted in 2010, 2011, and 2012 by the ETC Institute, May 2013

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



MEMORANDUM

TO: Austin City Council Audit & Finance Committee
CC: Larry Weis, General Manager
FROM: Kerry Overton, ^{KS}Deputy General Manager
DATE: June 24, 2013
SUBJECT: 311 Customer Service Initiative Follow-Up Audit

Austin Energy has reviewed the results of the 311 Customer Service Initiative Follow-up Audit and is in agreement with the audit findings.

The original audit, conducted in 2010, contained recommendations that the management team concurred with and once implemented would provide overall improvements to the 311 processes. Since then the 311 organization has worked diligently to implement the recommendations and have found that the changes resulted in better communications between 311 and other city departments as well as better customer service for the citizens of Austin.