

Your Guide to Finding the Perfect

# Citizen Engagement Software

## Are you keeping up with the ever-evolving needs and expectations of your community?

Every local government decision-maker wants to leave their mark — to make lasting improvements in their community. Today, one of the best ways to do that is to make sure your city is among the most digitally advanced in your state, region, or even the country.

The right citizen engagement software is essential to accomplish this goal. With it, you can increase citizen involvement and forge stronger, more impactful connections with your community.

But the fact remains: many local governments struggle to accomplish goals with their existing technology. They constantly battle software silos, inefficiencies, missing features, and unnecessary complexity. Overcoming these challenges requires better software that allows you to scale what's possible, serving as your springboard to becoming a truly “smart city.”

In this guide, we'll give you the most important questions to ask of software vendors to make sure you're getting a solution that truly empowers you to strengthen your community. And who knows, it may just put you in the running for “Digital City of the Year.”

To get a full picture of how well a software solution will work for your city, ask these nine questions:

- 1. Does it work with all services across all departments?**
- 2. Does it provide a complete and modern set of tools for your staff and citizens?**
- 3. Is it specifically designed for government?**
- 4. Does it automate the entire process, from request to fulfillment?**
- 5. How scalable is the pricing?**
- 6. How long will it take to implement?**
- 7. What kind of customer support is offered?**
- 8. How secure is it?**
- 9. Is the vendor stable and credible?**

Let's explore each of these questions in greater detail.

## QUESTION 1

# Does it work with all services across all departments?

Silos don't just happen on premises, in office buildings. As more cities turn to software solutions to streamline their processes, digital silos have taken hold.

Bill Pay happens through one system. Permits and code enforcement on another. Not only does this cause internal issues in the 311 space, but it gives citizens a confusing and haphazard user experience.

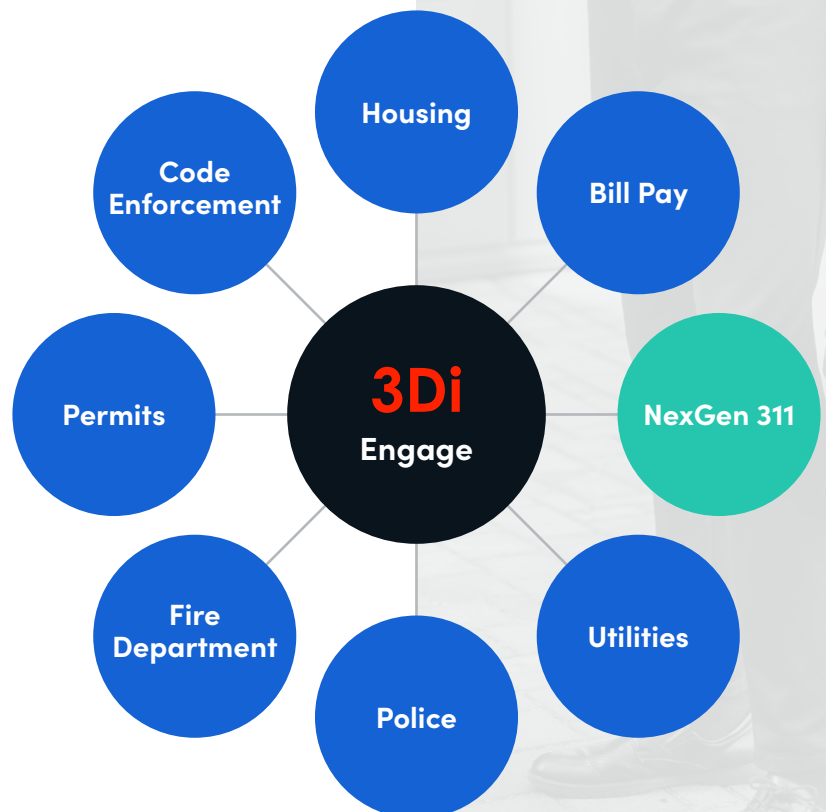
From transportation to homeless services to paying utility bills, animal control, getting an unwanted couch removed, and more — citizens should see you as a united front. Your software needs to be a seamless and transparent hub through all of your departments and every service you offer.



### Quick Compare: How does 3Di's Engage NexGen 311 stack up?

NexGen 311 is built on top of 3Di Engage, a powerful software platform with solutions for a variety of government functions. When your community also uses 3Di Engage in housing, public safety, and more — communication and collaboration between departments couldn't be easier.

But NexGen 311 doesn't just work well with other 3Di Engage solutions. To truly eliminate silos, it can be easily integrated with the other systems and applications your city uses.





## QUESTION 2

# Does it provide a complete and modern set of tools for your staff and citizens?

Every member of your community wants quick and convenient access to reach local leaders, issue requests, and find information. Now, more than ever, they're used to simple digital experiences that give them what they're looking for – and they expect the same thing from their government.

Make sure your engagement software offers professional, polished experiences for citizens that are mobile-friendly and easy to use. Ask what they offer for web applications, online portals, and mobile apps. The ideal solution will provide a consistent, high-quality experience across all communication channels citizens may want to use.

Once you're satisfied with the citizen-experience that the solution provides, delve into the experience it would provide to your staff. Does it give them all the tools they need to do their job? Are those tools easy to use and well-suited for the way your city operates?

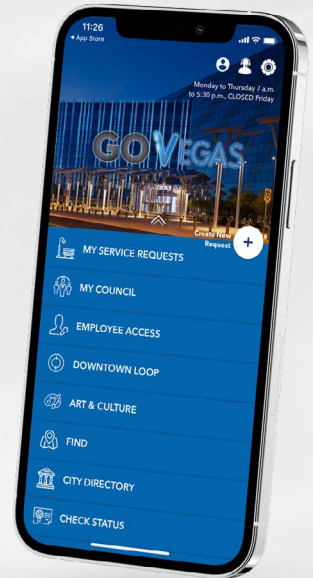
In order to truly encourage and increase involvement, citizen engagement software should be designed to do more than one thing. It should be a complete solution that, at a minimum, includes:

- Omnichannel capabilities
- Apps for citizens and city's field staff
- Knowledge base to readily locate information and services
- Data insights
- Self-service portals



### Quick Compare: How does 3Di Engage NexGen 311 stack up?

NexGen 311 is a 360-degree solution designed to solve a wide variety of citizen engagement challenges without the need for a disparate set of tools. With functionality for customer relationship management (CRM), service request lifecycle management, reporting, case management, knowledge base, mobile apps, and more – our software provides citizens the digital experiences they want and gives your staff the tools they need.



### NexGen 311 Solution

- Customer Relationship Manager, CRM
- Property Inventory Management
- Service Request Lifecycle
- Notifications & Alerts
- Integration Services (API)
- Reporting, Analytics & Dashboards
- Web Application & Portal Framework
- Mobile Application Framework
- Security & Compliance
- Multilingual Support
- Knowledge Base
- Case Management
- Universal Portal
- Workflow Management



### QUESTION 3

## Is it specifically designed for government?

Governments around the world are frequently forced to adapt made-for-business software to their needs. That approach can certainly work, but it will always feel a bit off — like only having a nail when you really need a screw.

Major CRM brands, for instance, often sell their software to governments. But while they are well versed in customer relationship management and enterprise-wide applications, do they really understand the intricacies of local government? Is their software built specifically for those nuances?

If you're looking for a solution to improve your citizen engagement (or the processes behind it), it will pay off to find one that's designed specifically for local government use. This will promote greater productivity, faster resolution, and data-driven management. Most importantly, it will always feel like it was made for you.

Ultimately, you need a software provider that understands how governments do their work, who's responsible for that work, and what it takes to connect your city with all of its citizens and stakeholders.

To gauge whether this is true for a potential software vendor, ask what percentage of their customers are local governments. And to get an even clearer picture of their understanding, simply engage them in a conversation about hot topics related to citizen engagement. The best vendors may even bring new ideas or strategies to the table that can become just as valuable as their software itself.



### **Quick Compare: How does 3Di Engage NexGen 311 stack up?**

Nearly all of 3Di's customers are local governments or community-focused organizations. The subject matter experts on our team pride themselves in keeping up with the latest best practices for citizen engagement and service request management. We're constantly inspired by the impact governments create when they're empowered with the right technology, so we remain laser-focused on building that technology.



#### QUESTION 4

## Does it automate the entire process from request to fulfillment?

The overall goal for citizen engagement software should be to help you deliver an exceptional experience for all services provided by your agency. When a citizen in your town needs something, they should get it. And the process should be transparent, seamless, and fast.

Your software solution must do more than just intake requests. It should automate as many of the steps from request to resolution as possible. After all, you're probably considering a customer engagement system because you're overwhelmed by trying to manage the consistent flow of citizen communications and department follow-up. At the very least, you aren't buying new software to do *more* work.

Seek out a solution that automates the workflows that were once handled manually to see the biggest improvement in your engagement. Be sure the solution you choose can:

- Convert citizen inquiries directly into internal service requests
- Automate follow-ups with internal departments until service requests are complete
- Automate follow-ups with the requesting citizen when work is complete
- Support the ability to quickly and easily modify workflows as business process change over time



### Quick Compare: How does 3Di Engage NexGen 311 stack up?

NexGen 311 was designed to make government employees' lives easier – and to empower them to create a bigger impact in the process. For example, after one large city launched NexGen 311, they were able to increase their service requests per year by nearly 3.5 million while simultaneously slashing call center wait times from 30 minutes to less than 60 seconds without adding more customer service representatives.

### One City's Results

#### Before NexGen 311

**0.5 M**

Service Requests  
Per Year

**30 Min**

Wait Time

#### With NexGen 311

**3.9 M**

Service Requests  
Per Year (2020)

**<60 Sec**

Wait Time

## QUESTION 5

# How scalable is the pricing?

Prices can vary dramatically from one type of solution to the next. Selecting one that's affordable to implement is important, but it's not the only pricing factor you should consider.

In addition to reviewing the upfront investment, be sure to clarify ongoing costs and how they may change over time.

With some basic research, you'll quickly learn that per-user pricing (aka per-seat license pricing) is usually the go-to SaaS pricing model. As its name suggests, you pay a fixed price for each user of the software. While this makes it easy for customers to understand and for vendors to predict revenue, ***per-user pricing is not ideal for government customer engagement platforms*** in our experience.

What happens if a new group of stakeholders wants access to reporting? Or if you want to integrate with an additional department down the road? Your price can jump drastically without the software actually providing much more value. If you go this route, make sure you have a clear idea of who may need access to the software in the future and what it costs to add users.

To avoid this issue altogether, you can find a software vendor that charges based on usage rather than users. This way, the only reason your costs go up is if citizens are actually increasing their engagement. With this model, your price is more closely tied to the value your solution is providing.



### Quick Compare: How does 3Di Engage NexGen 311 stack up?

Our software subscriptions are based on usage rather than users. Your number of users and roles will be virtually unlimited — allowing access to stakeholders across all departments now and into the future.





## QUESTION 6

# How long will it take to implement?

It should be understood that such a large-scale project will take some time to get up and running. From the initial scope meetings to project management to systems integration, customization, configuration, and training – there's a lot to get done.

But just how much time all that work will take varies substantially from one solution to the next.

The solutions that take the longest to put in place are the ones that are created from scratch just for you. While a tailor-made solution can sound appealing, this method is rarely pursued these days due to higher costs, more difficult maintenance, and slow implementation.

A more common option is to build on top of an existing product – like one of those mass-market CRM solutions we mentioned earlier. This approach is much quicker than building from scratch, but can still take 6 to 18 months before it's ready to use.

The fastest route is to use a solution that's already built for citizen engagement. There should still be a lot of options for customizing the software to your unique needs and processes, and it will still need to be integrated with any existing systems. But the core functionality of the software will be ready to go from day one – giving you a massive head start.

Regardless of the options you're evaluating, always be sure to ask potential vendors to share timelines with detailed milestones. You should also have clear expectations of what will be expected from your team throughout the process.



### **Quick Compare: How does 3Di Engage NexGen 311 stack up?**

Since NexGen 311 was built specifically for citizen engagement, it already has nearly everything a city needs. It can quickly be customized based on unique processes, extended for specific additional use cases, and integrated with your existing systems. Engage can be implemented in less than 120 days, and can even be implemented incrementally as resources become available if necessary.

## QUESTION 7

# What kind of customer support is offered?

Your software vendor should provide ongoing support, even after implementation. Ask your vendor about the client support they offer before you make your choice.

- Do they offer end user support for unforeseen issues?
- Do they provide around the clock support?
- Will you have a dedicated account support specialist?
- Will they provide updates to necessary components such as mobile apps?
- Will they monitor hosting and limit or prevent downtime?
- Will they help you add/remove/modify new types of service requests?
- Will they enhance or modify the system as your needs evolve?

Once you understand what they offer for support, clarify how they charge for it as well. Ask if it's included in their standard pricing, and if it's not, what the future support costs look like for a typical customer. The last thing you want when your system isn't working is an unexpected fee.

Don't be afraid to ask if they have references, case studies, and customer testimonials they can share. These can often be a goldmine of insights into the kind of support and customer care they offer.

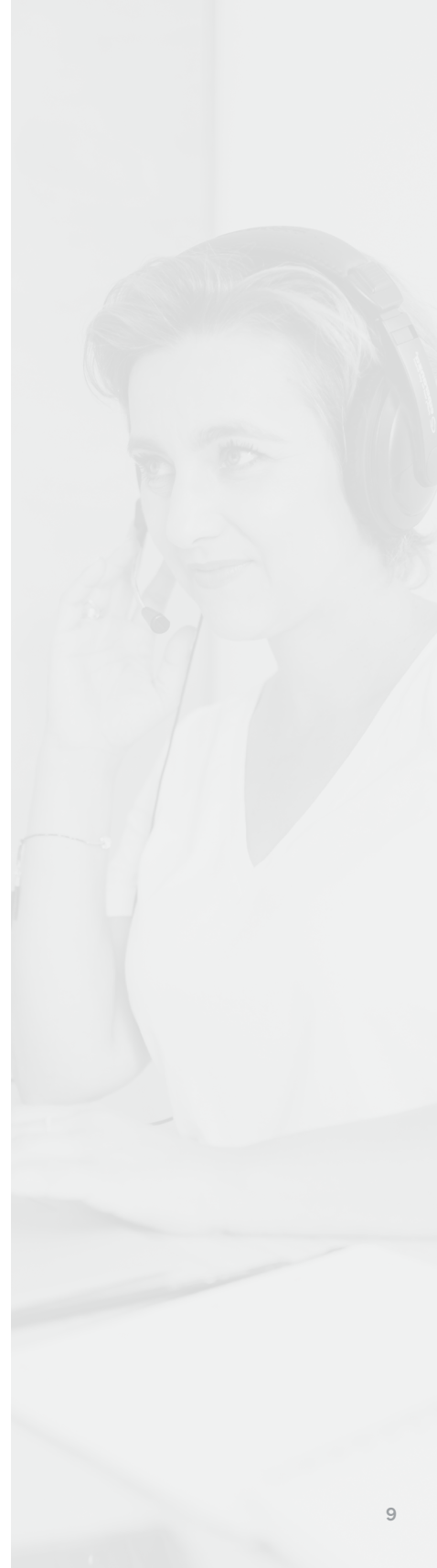


### Quick Compare: How does 3Di Engage NexGen 311 stack up?

3Di's support team is knowledgeable, friendly, and ready when you need it. We're happy to provide references and we're confident they'll tell you our support team is second to none.

Maintenance, Operations, and Support (MOS) on the back end to ensure smooth operation and "Genie Hours."

Genie Hours are a defined block of hours (typically 10 per month) that help your staff deal with any issues that may arise. Use them to get a new report set up, train a new employee, or anything else you may need.



## QUESTION 8

# How secure is it?

The information stored, accessed, and shared in a city's citizen engagement software is sensitive and must be highly protected.

Ask each vendor you evaluate how they're protecting your information, and what features their software has to help your team keep the system secure. Also discuss what their process is for responding to a breach if the worst were to happen.

Your best bet is to look for a vendor that has a partnership with a major cloud services provider. If a company is hosting your data on their own servers or using an obscure hosting provider, there's a good chance they lack some of the security features of a major brand like Amazon, Microsoft, or Oracle.



### **Quick Compare: How does 3Di Engage NexGen 311 stack up?**

3Di works closely with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to ensure your information remains as secure as possible. Why AWS?

Amazon Web Services (AWS) is the world's most comprehensive and broadly adopted cloud platform, offering over 200 fully featured services from data centers globally. Millions of customers—including the fastest-growing startups, largest enterprises, and leading government agencies—are using AWS to lower costs, become more agile, and innovate faster.

Every NexGen 311 customer is hosted in an AWS "single tenant" secured hosting instance. And with role-based access, you define and control what every person has access to and can do in your system.



## QUESTION 9

# Is the vendor stable and credible?

Extensively research the vendor's history. This is a big investment that has ramifications for your entire community. And chances are you'll be entering a partnership that lasts years, possibly even decades.

When evaluating the credibility of customer software vendors, look at things like:

- How long they have been in business
- Client retention rate
- Client satisfaction rate
- The depth and breadth of their client base
- Solutions that solve gaps in competitors' offerings
- Awards they've won in the government/citizen engagement space



### Quick Compare: How does 3Di Engage NexGen 311 stack up?

We've been focused on helping local governments and organizations improve their communities for the last 20 years and we couldn't be more proud of the work our clients have allowed us to do for them.



## 3Di at a Glance

20

Years Experience  
in Public Sector

300+

Government  
Solutions  
Delivered

77

Community  
Partnerships

20.5 M

People Served by  
Our Solutions

## WRAP-UP

# Get the best tools for modern citizen engagement.

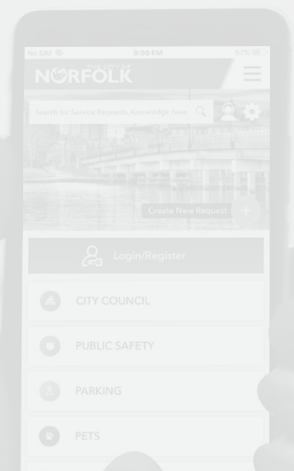
The citizen engagement challenges of today and opportunities of tomorrow will require powerful software solutions that you can depend on.

But with polished RFP responses and flawless demo presentations, just about any software can be made to appear attractive. Peeling back that first layer of paint to uncover what really matters is key to making a purchase your staff and your community will thank you for.

With the questions in this guide, you can be confident that your software solution:

- Offers a consistent, high quality citizen experience across channels.
- Goes beyond simply intaking requests to reduce response time and effort required.
- Creates seamless connections across a wide variety of functions.
- Scales easily as your city or its needs grow.
- Remains a reliable and powerful tool.

Use this guide to help you evaluate your next citizen engagement software purchase and you can rest easy knowing you're truly helping to move your city forward.





## Learn More About 3Di

At 3Di, we create powerful software solutions that empower governments and organizations to create stronger communities. Places where people feel safer, more engaged, and full of hope for their futures.

Even though local government employees across the country work tirelessly to advance these goals, many don't have the right tools for the job. We're here to change that.

From Los Angeles to Norfolk, Virginia, our solutions have been destroying silos, streamlining processes, and simplifying engagement for over 20 years — all with rapid implementation and robust support.

**Request a demo today to discover how NexGen 311 can help you create a positive impact for your city too.**