

Press Release

Mayor Newsom Launches National Initiative to Open 311 Customer Service Centers to Developers

President Obama's Chief Information Officer Vivek Kundra praises collaboration with Boston, Washington, DC, and other cities

03/03/10 – Today, Mayor Gavin Newsom was joined by President Obama's Chief Information Officer Vivek Kundra to launch a national Open311 API (Application Programming Interface) that will transform 311 Customer Service Centers into tools of even greater value. Open311 will allow software developers to write web applications that do two things: 1) get service request data directly from the 311 system, and 2) submit new service requests to city departments.

"We hope creative developers will build iPhone apps, Android apps, web sites and other mashups from the Open311 API," said Mayor Newsom. "I encourage cities to join this effort to save taxpayers money and empower our tech community. By opening up government we are transforming it to work better for all of us."

Over the past few months, San Francisco has been leading an effort with other cities and non-profits to build the Open311 API. Los Angeles, Boston, Washington DC, Portland, Seattle, Somerville, MA and Edmonton, Canada have all pledged to use the new Open311 standard in their cities.

"I am very encouraged by the innovative work that's being done here at the city level in San Francisco," said Federal Chief Information Officer Vivek Kundra. "By working together to develop Open 311, San Francisco, Boston, and the District of Columbia are harnessing the power of technology and cooperation to improve performance and deliver vital services to the American people."

San Francisco's 311 Customer Service Center, which launched in March 2007, has answered over 8 million calls and serves callers in more than 176 languages.

"In these fiscally challenging times, cities need to work together to solve our shared problems," said Chris Vein, Chief Information Officer for the City and County of San Francisco.

Open311 is part of a larger Open Gov Initiative for the City and County of San Francisco, which focuses on open data, open participation and open source.

"There's a new wave of innovation in the computer industry driven by mobile applications interacting with cloud-based data services. We literally are building an internet-operating system," said Tim O'Reilly, Founder and CEO of O'Reilly Media. "It's exciting to see government on the cutting edge of building that operating system, adopting open standards that allow private sector applications to interact with public sector services."

In 2009, Mayor Newsom announced a first of its kind application that allows San Franciscans to access 311 via Twitter. Instead of making a phone call, members of the public can send a tweet or a text to alert the city about a pothole, or find out about city initiatives. You can follow 311 on Twitter at [@SF311](https://twitter.com/SF311).

The Open311 API will be available to the public starting next week. You can visit the Open311 wiki for specifics on the API design ([http://wiki.open311.org/San Francisco#SF Open 311 API](http://wiki.open311.org/San_Francisco#SF_Open_311_API)), or encourage your city to use the Open311 API (<http://open311.org/pledge/>).