



Websites

What to look for:

1. Staff can update without relying on a vendor, or your nephew. ;-)
2. Inexpensive, no large upfront costs, no long term contracts (technology changes quickly!)
3. Predictable (preferably unlimited, included) support, regular updates for security and features
4. Responsive, mobile friendly (helps search engine results)
5. https (security / SSL) - helps with search engine results, protects transactions
6. **Compliance with Federal Section 508 / WCAG 2.0 AA** for visitors with disabilities
7. **Compliance with State requirements**
 - a. agendas online 72 hours (CA) or 24 hours (OR) in advance of meetings
 - b. link to Controller's PublicPay website (or upload most recent compensation report) (CA)
 - c. Financial Transaction Report (CA)
 - d. SB 272 Enterprise System Catalog (CA)
 - e. Searchable, indexable agendas (coming Jan. 2019, AB 2257) (CA)

Website platform resources—popular options for local government websites:

1. Wordpress (10up.com \$10s of thousands, or, free Wordpress option)
2. Drupal (Digital Deployment \$10s of thousands, or do it yourself with IT staff)
3. Streamline (unlimited support, monthly subscription based upon operating revenue, designed for SDs)
4. Vision Internet (big in City space, \$10s of thousands)
5. Civica (big in City space, \$10s of thousands)
6. Squarespace (cheapest, monthly subscription of \$16 and up) - better for small businesses and designers

Website content resources:

1. Stock photography: unsplash.com, pexels.com, picjumbo.com (all free, and safe)*
2. Icon options: iconsdb.com, iconmonster.com
3. Streaming video: open.media (free for < 5K citizens, inexpensive for more), granicus.com (expensive.)

**Don't use icon or photo sources that require you to download software to access content*

Website testing and tracking resources:

1. Accessibility testing: achecker.ca - great for checking for Section 508 / WCAG 2.0 AA compliance
2. Overall site testing: nibbler.silktide.com (checks content structure, technology, security and more)
3. Tracking: google.com/analytics - see what pages are popular, what devices visitors are using (free)

Searchable online content

1. Image vs text based PDFs
 - o Scanned or image-based PDFs are much larger file sizes than text-based PDF, and are not searchable by Google (or Streamline!)
 - o In CA: AB 2257 (coming Jan. 2019) - agendas must be searchable and indexable, and on the home page - learn more at <https://tinyurl.com/ab2257>

- Only the agenda needs to be searchable, not the entire packet
- Minutes are not required to be posted (but you should!)
- 2. Tip: for agendas, from Word > save (or export) to PDF to create a text-based file
- 3. Convert existing image-based PDFs to text-based:
 - Use free-online-ocr.com, onlineocr.net
 - Adobe Acrobat Pro: Enhance scans > recognize text
- 4. SEO (search engine optimization)
 - Save staff time with great content that meets potential search terms (“how do I report graffiti?”) - think like your visitors, and check in with front line customer support to find out what people call about
 - Lead the conversation when you need to do a rate increase, or other potentially contentious issue (*something* will show up in search, shouldn't it be your story?)

Bonus tips:

1. Don't include proprietary file types (Word, Excel) - instead, create a PDF of the original (save as...) Not everyone has MS Word, etc. but PDFs open in almost all recent browsers, Acrobat is not needed
2. Whenever possible, create website content using the website interface, don't just upload PDFs.
3. If you **do** need to upload a PDF (for example, an agenda, or ordinance), save it to PDF from the original software you used to create it (Word) instead of printing and then scanning, which creates an image-based PDF that is not searchable.

Online bill pay

Paygov.us

Cindy Quigley, Board Clerk / Bookkeeper, Lake Oroville Area Public Utility District
4500 customers

Best for: ability to pay online, in person, over the phone

Pros: no cost to the district

Cons: cannot see bills, only pay online

Cost: 3% with minimum of \$1 per transaction to the client; 4.95% with minimum of \$4.95 if operator assistance is needed.

From Cindy: “I can go into our interface, print a report, etc. but I don't have to, as everything comes via email. The only problem I have with them (as the bookkeeper), balancing my bank statements, since sometimes transactions show in Eastern time zone, which makes the daily totals kinda hard to figure out. Customer service seems to be good, it's run by a couple (it's not a government entity), and I'm able to email the owners directly.”

Paymentus.com

Candi Bingham, General Manager, River Pines Public Utility District
210 customers

Includes the ability to allow payments when and how customers want with a consistent, user-friendly experience across all channels: Mobile, Self-Service Portal, Online Quick Pay, Paperless eBilling, Pay-by-Text, Pay-by-Email, AutoPay

Best for: agencies looking for lots of options (or only to pay for a few)

Pros: ease of setup, multitude of options

Cons: options likely add cost

Cost: for eBilling and online payment processing \$2.95 per transaction to customer, no cost to district

From Candi: "We have been very happy with Paymentus. They made it incredibly easy to set up. In fact, I did not have to do anything and to get it on our website, I think you guys handle that with information we received from Paymentus. The customer service is very good. They also give you training on how to access reports, etc. Here are key points that I like:

1. Payment deposits - very easy to reconcile
2. Easy access for - District & Customer (they can also bring their card into the office and I can take the payment by logging in)
3. NO cost to the District - customer pays transaction fee
4. Deposits into account 1-2 days after being made
5. You can block customers from making payments - NSF, etc. (I have had to use this several times for individuals trying to use stolen accounts, cards etc.)

Also, customers can access their accounts if the District chooses to use this service. There is a fee and I am not sure how much it is but it is something we will be checking into. I wanted to see if customers would use the online payments before we offered this. More and more are using it and would like access to see their account history, etc.

Infosend / Onlinebiller.com

Jennifer Brust, Vista Irrigation District

26,000 customers

Print and handle the mailing of the bills

Email bills saying bill is ready / due – can pay online

No usage features, but you can see all bills in PDF

Fee - Vista pays the fee, only use checking account not credit cards

ACH fee per transaction to take payment, by bank

Infosend: charge \$350 per month support, 7c per enrolled user per month, loading and storage of electronic bills (2c per bill) - initiated payment 5c per payment

They post a file of all payments that come in, we import it into our system every morning.

Customer support - Infosend is really good on both ends

Online credit card - officialpayments.com, charge \$3 for electronic check by phone, 3.95 for credit card

Customer support - clients contact them directly and they help

This is typically used quickly for people in a jam (water lock off)

Accela

Vanessa Martinez, Finance Manager, Rainbow Municipal Water District

7,800 customers

Are customers able to see bills / usage etc, or just pay their bill? Yes customers are able to see bill information and usage.

Can customers pay online and / or by phone? Online, if by phone it is through our Customer Service Representatives taking the payment through the online bill pay website

How many customers do you have? Approximately 7,800

How is the vendor's customer service? It's unfortunately mediocre.

What fees are involved for the customer? We do not pass on the merchant fees to the customer, District absorbs all cost.

What is the cost to the district? Annual subscription \$4,680 plus \$.75/transaction in addition to standard merchant fees.

General pros or cons you can share? Real time payment information linked to the Utility Billing system. Con – daily online payments do not correlate to daily deposits, this creates the reconciling process to be more tedious than needed.

Any other general thoughts on how you like it? Not impressed.

Email and newsletters

- Email campaigns - GovDelivery (Granicus) on the expensive end, Mailchimp on the cheaper (or free) end. Email solution (instead of Outlook) - Google G Suite for government

Polling and surveys

Flashvote

SurveyMonkey

SurveyGizmo

Webforms

- FlashVote - quickly take the temperature of your constituents on important issues, or use it to reach out on a regular schedule..
- Surveys - SurveyGizmo, SurveyMonkey - can be sent via email or embedded in your site. Great for when you have multiple questions to ask, infrequently (aka for a website redesign, or to determine if you should start an email newsletter).
- Webforms on your site are a great way to encourage feedback (example on <https://www.sgvmosquito.org/resident-satisfaction-survey>)

Issue reporting

See/Click/Fix

Collect service requests via mobile apps, website forms, inbound calls emails, and tweets. Assign and route requests based on geography and type. Manage communication with citizens and staff from submission to resolution.

Best for: agencies who want someone else to manage reporting software

Pros: an app! People love apps! And you don't have to maintain it.

Cons: Can be pricey, need to encourage residents to download and use it

Cost: minimum \$5,000 per year, or 25c / 50c per resident

<https://gov.seeclickfix.com/government/>

Graphics available on the site

Built to work for overlapping jurisdictions

Same platform enhances the experience

You get the data you need, but customers can also report to the right agency

Boundaries of the district helps them define who signs up

Pricing: two different offerings

Request management portion - resident generated requests

Work portion - internal work order management system (tracked, managed in the system)

Minimum is \$5,000 annually

Or: 25c per resident for each, so 50c for both

Annual for 50,000 resident district = \$25,000 recurring

ArcGIS Citizen Problem Reporter

Citizen Problem Reporter is a configuration of the Crowdsourcing Reporter application that allows the general public to submit non-emergency problems (for example, blight, graffiti, trash, pothole, and flooding) in their community from a smartphone, tablet, and desktop computer.

Best for: agencies with IT staff, already using ArcGIS

Pros: if already using ArcGIS, provides an integrated backend

Cons: Can be pricey, requires IT staff and staff knowledge

Cost: varies, based upon existing ArcGIS subscription or license

Custom app

Building a custom application that your residents can download and report problems from their phone.

Best for: agencies with internal development staff, or ability to manage outside developers

Pros: you can build whatever you want.

Cons: can be expensive, and you're responsible for maintaining it as operating systems evolve. Have to convince people to download it. Since it's separate from your site, residents won't know how to report on your website, or the experience will be different.

Cost: varies. Based on online estimator: <http://howmuchtomakeanapp.com/> minimum \$28,000 for outside development. Internal costs could be higher.

Website forms

A simple form on your mobile-friendly / responsive site can do the trick. You can add a single form with options for the citizen to choose (report graffiti, report an outage, report) or multiple forms in locations where visitors will be looking to send feedback.

Best for: agencies wanting to keep it simple

Pros: inexpensive, does not require residents to download anything

Cons: may not be able to be configured for automated workflow

Cost: most websites should include form functionality for free, or use something like Formstack for \$40+ per month

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