



# Washington State Auditor's Office

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## Accountability Audit Report Whatcom County

**For the period January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014**

**Published August 24, 2015**

**Report No. 1014846**





## Washington State Auditor's Office

August 24, 2015

Council  
Whatcom County  
Bellingham, Washington

### Report on Accountability

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you to promote accountability, integrity and openness in government. The State Auditor's Office takes seriously our role of providing state and local governments with assurance and accountability as the independent auditor of public accounts. In this way, we strive to help government work better, cost less, deliver higher value and earn greater public trust.

Independent audits provide essential accountability and transparency for County operations. This information is valuable to management, the governing body and public stakeholders when assessing the government's stewardship of public resources.

The attached comprises our report on the County's compliance and safeguarding of public resources. Our independent audit report describes the overall results and conclusions for areas we examined. We appreciate the opportunity to work with your staff and we value your cooperation during the audit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jan M. Jutte".

JAN M. JUTTE, CPA, CGFM  
ACTING STATE AUDITOR  
OLYMPIA, WA

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## AUDIT SUMMARY

### Results in brief

In the areas we audited, County operations complied with applicable requirements and provided adequate safeguarding of public resources. The County also complied with state laws and regulations and its own policies and procedures in the areas we examined.

### About the audit

This report contains the results of our independent accountability audit of Whatcom County from January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014.

Management is responsible for ensuring compliance and adequate safeguarding of public resources from fraud, loss or abuse. This includes the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls relevant to these objectives.

Our audit involved performing procedures to obtain evidence about the County's uses of public resources, compliance with state laws and regulations and its own policies and procedures, and internal controls over such matters.

In keeping with general auditing practices, we do not examine every transaction, activity or area. Instead, the areas examined were those representing the highest risk of fraud, loss, abuse, or noncompliance. The following areas were examined during this audit period:

- Procurement
- Payroll
- Disbursements
- Safeguarding of assets
- Self-insurance
- Court and jail receipting followup
- Restricted funds

## RELATED REPORTS

### **Financial**

Our opinion on the County's financial statements and compliance with federal grant program requirements is provided in a separate report issued in August 2015, which includes the County's financial statements. That report is available on our website, <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

### **Federal grant programs**

We evaluated internal controls and tested compliance with the federal program requirements, as applicable, for the County's major federal programs, which are listed in the Federal Summary section of the financial statement and single audit report issued in August 2015. That report is available on our website, <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE COUNTY

Whatcom County serves approximately 203,500 residents under its Home Rule Charter adopted in 1978. The County has a legislative branch, composed of a seven-member County Council, and an executive branch, composed of an elected County Executive, Assessor, Auditor, Treasurer, Prosecuting Attorney and Sheriff.

The County provides an array of services including health and human services, cooperative extension, Medical Examiner, parks and recreation, planning and development services, Auditor's Office (licensing and recording), Assessor's Office, Treasurer's Office and Public Works (engineering, equipment rental, ferry and maintenance and operations). In addition, the County provides District Court, District Court probation, Superior Court, Juvenile Court (probation and detention), Law Library, Hearing Examiner's Office, jail, Sheriff (emergency management and patrol), Prosecuting Attorney's Office (criminal and civil) and Public Defender.

For fiscal year 2014, the County operated on a general fund budget of \$81.9 million and had approximately 838 employees.

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*Information current as of report publish date.*

### Audit history

You can find current and past audit reports for Whatcom County at <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

## ABOUT THE STATE AUDITOR'S OFFICE

The State Auditor's Office is established in the state's Constitution and is part of the executive branch of state government. The State Auditor is elected by the citizens of Washington and serves four-year terms.

We work with our audit clients and citizens to achieve our vision of government that works for citizens, by helping governments work better, cost less, deliver higher value, and earn greater public trust.

In fulfilling our mission to hold state and local governments accountable for the use of public resources, we also hold ourselves accountable by continually improving our audit quality and operational efficiency and developing highly engaged and committed employees.

As an elected agency, the State Auditor's Office has the independence necessary to objectively perform audits and investigations. Our audits are designed to comply with professional standards as well as to satisfy the requirements of federal, state, and local laws.

Our audits look at financial information and compliance with state, federal and local laws on the part of all local governments, including schools, and all state agencies, including institutions of higher education. In addition, we conduct performance audits of state agencies and local governments as well as [fraud](#), state [whistleblower](#) and [citizen hotline](#) investigations.

The results of our work are widely distributed through a variety of reports, which are available on our [website](#) and through our free, electronic [subscription](#) service.

We take our role as partners in accountability seriously, and provide training and technical assistance to governments, and have an extensive quality assurance program.

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