



Washington State Auditor's Office

Government that works for citizens

Accountability Audit Report Cowlitz County

For the period January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015

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Washington State Auditor's Office

October 20, 2016

Board of Commissioners
Cowlitz County
Kelso, 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,

TROY KELLEY
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 Cowlitz County from January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015.

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:

- Use of restricted funds
- Payroll
- Building and planning permits
- Cash receipting – Corrections, Sheriff, Treasurer, Clerk of the Court, Public Works, and Hoffstadt Bluff and Silver Lake gift shops
- County fair
- Disbursements
- Procurement of architectural and engineering services
- Safeguarding of small and attractive assets

RELATED REPORTS

Financial

Our opinion on the County's financial statements and compliance with federal grant program requirements is provided in a separate report, 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 program, which is listed in the Schedule of Findings and Questioned Costs section of the separate financial statement and single audit report. That report is available on our website, <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COUNTY

Cowlitz County serves approximately 104,280 citizens residing in Southwest Washington. The County is administered by an elected three-member Board of Commissioners. In 2015, the County operated on an annual budget of approximately \$174 million.

The County currently employs 514 full-time and 89 part-time workers, 350 of whom are currently members of one of 12 bargaining units. The employees provide an array of services, including planning and development, water, sewer, road construction, parks and recreation, human services, public safety, civil and criminal courts and geographic information services.

Contact information related to this report

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Information current as of report publish date.

Audit history

You can find current and past audit reports for Cowlitz 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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