



Office of the Washington State Auditor  
Pat McCarthy

## **Accountability Audit Report**

# **Housing Authority of the City of Bellingham**

**(Bellingham Housing Authority)**

**For the period January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021**

*Published February 27, 2023*

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**Office of the Washington State Auditor  
Pat McCarthy**

February 27, 2023

Board of Commissioners  
Bellingham Housing Authority  
Bellingham, Washington

**Report on Accountability**

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you to promote accountability, integrity and openness in government. The Office of the Washington State Auditor 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 Housing Authority operations. This information is valuable to management, the governing body and public stakeholders when assessing the government's stewardship of public resources.

Attached is our independent audit report on the Housing Authority's compliance with applicable requirements and safeguarding of public resources for the areas we examined. We appreciate the opportunity to work with your staff and value your cooperation during the audit.

Sincerely,

Pat McCarthy, State Auditor  
Olympia, WA

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## AUDIT RESULTS

### Results in brief

This report describes the overall results and conclusions for the areas we examined. In those selected areas, Housing Authority operations complied, in all material respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, and its own policies, and provided adequate controls over the safeguarding of public resources.

In keeping with general auditing practices, we do not examine every transaction, activity, policy, internal control, or area. As a result, no information is provided on the areas that were not examined.

### About the audit

This report contains the results of our independent accountability audit of Bellingham Housing Authority from January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021.

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.

This audit was conducted under the authority of RCW 43.09.260, which requires the Office of the Washington State Auditor to examine the financial affairs of all local governments. Our audit involved obtaining evidence about the Housing Authority's use of public resources, compliance with state laws and regulations and its own policies and procedures, and internal controls over such matters. The procedures performed were based on our assessment of risks in the areas we examined.

Based on our risk assessment for the years ended December 31, 2021 and 2020, the areas examined were those representing the highest risk of fraud, loss, abuse, or noncompliance. We examined the following areas during this audit period:

- Payroll – gross wages, leave balances and accruals, benefit deductions
- Rental revenues
- Cash receipting – timeliness and completeness of deposits
- Accounts payable – credit cards
- Open public meetings – compliance with minutes, meetings and executive session requirements
- Financial condition – reviewing for indications of financial distress

## RELATED REPORTS

### **Financial**

A financial statement audit was performed by a firm of certified public accountants. That firm's 2020 report is available on our website, <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

### **Federal grant programs**

A firm of certified public accountants evaluated internal controls and tested compliance with the federal program requirements, as applicable, for the Housing Authority's major federal programs. That firm's 2020 report is available on our website, <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>. That report includes a federal finding as there was not a rent reasonableness completed for two tenants.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Housing Authority of the City of Bellingham was established in 1945 to provide and manage housing for low-income residents of the city of Bellingham. Whatcom County Housing Authority contracts with the Housing Authority to administer its programs. In addition, the two entities share a Board of Commissioners.

The Whatcom County Executive appoints two members and the city of Bellingham Mayor appoints three members. The Bellingham Housing Authority has approximately 52 employees that serve both entities. The Housing Authority is primarily funded through direct federal grants. Operating revenues for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 were \$26,127,821 and \$24,180,125.

### 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 the Bellingham Housing Authority at <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

## ABOUT THE STATE AUDITOR'S OFFICE

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

We work with state agencies, local governments and the public to achieve our vision of increasing trust in government by helping governments work better and deliver higher value.

In fulfilling our mission to provide citizens with independent and transparent examinations of how state and local governments use public funds, we hold ourselves to those same standards by continually improving our audit quality and operational efficiency, and by developing highly engaged and committed employees.

As an agency, the State Auditor's Office has the independence necessary to objectively perform audits, attestation engagements and investigations. Our work is designed to comply with professional standards as well as to satisfy the requirements of federal, state and local laws. The Office also has an extensive quality control program and undergoes regular external peer review to ensure our work meets the highest possible standards of accuracy, objectivity and clarity.

Our audits look at financial information and compliance with federal, state and local laws for all local governments, including schools, and all state agencies, including institutions of higher education. In addition, we conduct performance audits and cybersecurity audits of state agencies and local governments, as well as state whistleblower, fraud and citizen hotline investigations.

The results of our work are available to everyone through the more than 2,000 reports we publish each year on our website, [www.sao.wa.gov](http://www.sao.wa.gov). Additionally, we share regular news and other information via an email subscription service and social media channels.

We take our role as partners in accountability seriously. The Office provides training and technical assistance to governments both directly and through partnerships with other governmental support organizations.

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