



Office of the Washington State Auditor
Pat McCarthy

Accountability Audit Report

Spokane County

For the period January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022

Published June 13, 2024

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

June 13, 2024

Board of Commissioners
Spokane County
Spokane, 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 County 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 County'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

Americans with Disabilities

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Audit Results..... 4

Related Reports..... 6

Information about the County..... 7

About the State Auditor's Office..... 8

AUDIT RESULTS

Results in brief

This report describes the overall results and conclusions for the areas we examined. In those selected areas, County 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.

However, we noted certain matters related to cash receipting at solid waste transfer stations that we communicated to County management and the Board of Commissioners in a letter dated June 7, 2024. We appreciate the County's commitment to resolving those matters.

Additionally, during the audit certain matters came to our attention that are currently under investigation.

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 Spokane County from January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022.

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 County'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 year ended December 31, 2022, the areas examined were those representing the highest risk of fraud, loss, abuse, or noncompliance. We examined the following areas during this audit period:

- Tracking and monitoring of theft sensitive assets, such as computers, tools, equipment, fuel and gift cards
- Cash receipting – timeliness and completeness of deposits, voids, and adjustments at transfer stations

- Accounts payable – electronic funds transfers and credit cards
- Use of restricted funds – county road funds, homeless prevention funds, and community services / mental health funds
- Contributions and donations – county road fund
- Procurement – purchases and purchase exemptions
- Financial condition – reviewing for indications of financial distress
- Open public meetings – compliance with minutes, meetings and executive session requirements

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>.

That report includes a finding for a significant deficiency in internal controls over financial reporting regarding prepayments, unearned revenues, fund balances, transfers, and federal grants on the County's annual report.

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 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>.

Performance audits

Initiative 900, approved by voters in 2005, gives the State Auditor's Office the authority to conduct independent performance audits of state and local government entities. Performance audits may include objective analysis on ways to improve program performance and operations, reduce costs and identify best practices.

We issued the separate Civil Asset Forfeiture: Strengthening transparency and protections for property owners performance audit report, which is available on our website, <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COUNTY

Spokane County is the fourth largest county in the state with an estimated 2022 population of 550,700 residents. The local economy traditionally has relied on forest products, agriculture and mining. However, it has diversified its economy to become a regional and national leader in health care, education technology and recreation. The County is also home to Fairchild Air Force Base.

The County is governed by an elected, three-member Board of Commissioners. Additional elected officials and the appointed Chief Executive Officer oversee the County's daily operations and its approximately 2,000 full-time equivalent employees. The County provides services including public safety, road systems, recreational opportunities, court services, election services, regional planning and property valuations and tax collections. For fiscal year 2022, the County adopted on an annual general fund operating budget of approximately \$285 million.

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 Spokane County 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. 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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