



Washington State Auditor's Office

Government that works for citizens

Accountability Audit Report

Whatcom Council of Governments

Whatcom County

For the period January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2015

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Washington State Auditor's Office

May 12, 2016

Council Board
Whatcom Council of Governments
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 Council 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 Council'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, Council operations complied with applicable requirements and provided adequate safeguarding of public resources. The Council 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 the Whatcom Council of Governments from January 1, 2014 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 Council'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:

- Payroll
- Cash receipting
- Petty cash
- Procurement policy
- Bylaws
- Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA)

RELATED REPORTS

Financial

Our opinion on the Council's financial statements and compliance with federal grant program requirements is provided in a separate report, which includes the Council'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 Council's major federal program, which is listed in the Federal Summary section of the separate financial statement and single audit report. The report is available on our website, <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Whatcom Council of Governments is an intergovernmental organization that coordinates projects primarily relating to transportation issues to mutually benefit the member entities. Established in 1966 as a multi-jurisdictional body, the Council represents local governments in Whatcom County, which serve an estimated 207,600 citizens. The Council has a staff of 10 employees. In fiscal year 2014 and 2015, the Council operated on budgets of approximately \$2.1 million and \$1.5 million, respectively. The majority of the Council's funding comes from federal, state and local grants along with local dues.

The governing officials of the Council consist of a Council Board and an Executive Committee. The Council Board is a 20-member board comprised of elected representatives of local general purpose and special district governments throughout Whatcom County. The Executive Committee carries out the responsibilities of day-to-day Council activities. Mayors, Executives, Commissioners, and Council Members of participating local governments serve as Board Members. As of December 31, 2015, the full Council included representatives from the following local governments: City of Bellingham, City of Blaine, City of Everson, City of Ferndale, City of Lynden, City of Nooksack, City of Sumas, Whatcom County, Lummi Nation, Port of Bellingham, Birch Bay Water and Sewer District and Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District.

Contact information related to this report

Address:	Whatcom Council of Governments 314 E. Champion Street Bellingham, WA 98225-4502
Contact:	Ron Cubellis, Deputy Executive Director
Telephone:	(360) 676-6974
Website:	www.wcog.org

Information current as of report publish date.

Audit history

You can find current and past audit reports for the Whatcom Council of Governments 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.

Contact information for the State Auditor's Office	
Public Records requests	PublicRecords@sao.wa.gov
Main telephone	(360) 902-0370
Toll-free Citizen Hotline	(866) 902-3900
Website	www.sao.wa.gov