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Office of the District of Columbia Auditor



OFFICE of the DISTRICT of COLUMBIA AUDITOR

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About the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA)

OUR MISSION

The Office of the District of Columbia Auditor's (ODCA) mission is to support the Council of the District of Columbia by making sound recommendations that improve the economy, efficiency, and accountability of the District government.

To fulfill our mission, we conduct performance audits, non-audit reviews, and revenue certifications. The residents of the District of Columbia are one of our primary customers and we strive to keep the residents of the District of Columbia informed on how their government is operating and how their tax money is being spent.

OUR STATUTORY AUTHORITY

ODCA was authorized by Section 455 of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, D.C. Code Section 1-204.55(b) which states: "The District of Columbia Auditor shall each year conduct a thorough audit of the accounts and operations of the government of the District in accordance with such principles and procedures and under such rules and regulations as he/she may prescribe."

ACCESS TO RECORDS

During audits, ODCA requires access to agency records, files and other information to complete the audit effectively. ODCA's right to access information required for audit purposes is detailed in D.C. Code Section 1-204.55 (c) which states: "The District of Columbia Auditor shall have access to all books, accounts, records, reports, findings, and all other papers, things or property belonging to or in use by any department, agency, or instrumentality of the District government and necessary to facilitate the audit." ODCA has taken necessary steps to safeguard all confidential and/or proprietary information obtained in the course of our audits.

ODCA AND ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONS (ANCS)

The Advisory Neighborhood Commissions Act of 1975 created ANCs to represent residents within Commission areas in each of the 8 Wards of the District. The ANCs are empowered to advise the District government on matters of public policy, including decisions regarding planning, streets, recreation, social services, programs, health, safety, and sanitation in the Commission area. ANCs are funded by District revenues through annual appropriations.

ODCA is responsible for providing financial oversight of the 40 ANCs. ODCA also provides guidance to the ANCs to ensure that internal controls are adequate to produce reliable financial information and to help safeguard the ANC's assets.

What is an Audit?

Audits are an integral part of the District of Columbia's system of "checks and balances," providing objective, independent reviews of agency stewardship and fostering accountability to the residents of the District. ODCA audits are guided by Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards established by the Comptroller General of the United States. These standards provide a framework for conducting quality audits with competence, integrity, objectivity, and independence.

Performance audits represent the vast majority of the work conducted by ODCA. Performance Audits are comprehensive, detailed reviews that assess an agency or program's effectiveness, economy, efficiency, internal controls, and/or compliance.

The Audit Process

The decision to initiate an audit is determined by a combination of factors, including legislative requirements, the program or agency's risk for fraud, waste and abuse, and requests from residents and members of the Council of the District of Columbia.

ODCA audits have four interrelated phases. It is our goal to keep the audited agency apprised of the status of the audit during each phase through meetings, informal discussions and briefings. The audit team will also advise the agency of critical issues that may require immediate resolution.

An audit can be a disruptive and a time consuming process for agencies and their staff. We make a concerted effort to reduce disruption to agency operations and minimize the additional burden on agency staff during our audit process.

PLANNING PHASE

The planning phase marks the beginning of ODCA's research and information gathering. One goal of the planning phase is to define where and how we assign audit staff and resources. This results in a better focused audit effort and helps us to determine if the audit will add value.

Engagement Letter and Entrance Conference

ODCA's first formal communication with the agency being considered for audit is an engagement letter to the director of the agency. The letter communicates an overview of the preliminary objectives, scope, methodology and timing of the audit. The letter also includes the date and time for the entrance conference which sets the tone for the audit to follow. The entrance conference provides an opportunity for agency management to meet the audit team and for ODCA to inform management about the audit process.

SURVEY PHASE

During the survey phase, the audit team conducts a risk assessment of key organizational operations. The audit team reviews relevant laws, regulations, policies, procedures, best practices and professional literature about the agency and relevant programs. We also conduct interviews with agency staff to gain an understanding of agency operations. Our goal is to develop a complete understanding of the agency or program to finalize sound audit objectives and identify the key areas that will be audited.

FIELD WORK PHASE

During the field work phase, we obtain an even more in-depth understanding of the issues and answer questions that were raised during the survey phase. During this phase, we may conduct sampling and testing of data, in depth interviews, and detailed reviews of work processes.

Closeout Meeting

After completing our field work analyses, the audit team holds a meeting with agency management to discuss our preliminary findings and conclusions. The audit team works to clearly convey the facts and circumstances surrounding each finding and attempts to correct any misunderstandings and/or inaccuracies prior to moving to the reporting phase of the audit process.

REPORTING PHASE

Draft Report

The audit team prepares a draft audit report when field work is completed. The report communicates the audit findings and recommendations. We conduct a vigorous review to validate all of the information contained in the report, ensuring that all conclusions are supported by sufficient and appropriate evidence.

Agency Review of Draft Report and Exit Conference

ODCA sends the draft report containing our audit findings and recommendations to appropriate parties along with instructions for providing comments on the draft report and the comment period. During the comment period, an agency can request an exit conference which is held at the D.C. Auditor's office. At least 24 hours before the exit conference, the agency is required to submit a detailed agenda of the concerns or issues to be addressed.

Agencies or affected parties should formally respond, in writing, indicating their official position (agree or

disagree) on each recommendation in the draft report, within 15 business days. The response can also include concerns with findings or facts in the report. All written responses are reviewed by ODCA and changes are made to the report, if warranted. The submitted responses are always included in the final report.

Final Report

Once the agency's comments have been reviewed and incorporated into the draft report, ODCA conducts another internal review and the final report is issued and posted to ODCA's website. The final report is also presented to the Council of the District of Columbia, the Mayor, and select members of Congress.

POST-AUDIT AGENCY FEEDBACK

We take our mission to support the Council of the District of Columbia to improve District government very seriously. Constructive feedback about how agencies view our services is critical to us. After the final report is released, we send out a survey to the agency director, relevant agency staff and/or entities. We hope the responses, which can be submitted anonymously, will provide valuable information that will help us improve our operations.