Fiscal Year 2019 Follow-Up

When we complete audit work and issue recommendations, we aim to improve the way the City serves its citizens. Follow-up projects are intended to loop back with management and verify that known issues are addressed.

Objective

To test the implementation of recommendations from our audit reports.

Background

- City Code requires that City management provide a response to each audit report recommendation, either agreeing or disagreeing, and describing the actions they will take in response to the recommendations.

- The Office of the City Auditor has a follow-up program that confirms that actions proposed by management were taken.

To streamline the follow-up process, in 2019, our office implemented a new software called TeamCentral to better track recommendations and their implementation.

Cover: Aerial view of downtown Austin, iStock.com/RoschetzkyIstockPhoto

What We Found

While we were able to confirm implementation of a large portion of our recommendations, some have been outstanding for as long as 5 years. For example, recommendations issued in 2013, addressing the areas listed below, are not implemented to date:

worker safety practices

City-owned property inventory

website governance

drug and alcohol testing procedures

results of this year's testing

19 Implemented

3 Underway

Examples of areas where improvements were made as a result of implementing our recommendations include:

capital projects administration

access controls to utility system

forestry management

results of testing to date
(for recommendations issued in FY12 - FY18)

99 Confirmed as Implemented

of

130 Tested

We will continue our ongoing follow-up program and will work with management to ensure that improvement opportunities identified by our Office result in improvements of the City's operations.

What We Found - Details

Audit of the Capital Project Delivery Process

1. Review, update as necessary, and enforce the Quality Management Division's quality management process to focus on risk-based reviews. The Director should also ensure the Division has sufficient resources allocated to meet departmental needs and expectations.

    IMPLEMENTED

2. Work in conjunction with the Capital Contracting Office to review, update as necessary, and enforce a risk-based change order process that is realistic for project needs and protects the City from unnecessary costs.

    IMPLEMENTED

3. Review, update as necessary, and enforce the Dept's project cost estimation process and work with stakeholders to develop a more accurate process.

    IMPLEMENTED

4. Review, update as necessary, and enforce the documentation requirements for construction inspectors and ensure inspectors are assigned to every project under construction, whether these inspectors are from PWD, other city departments, or hired from a 3rd party.

    IMPLEMENTED

5. Work with the Capital Contracting Office and Law Department to reduce barriers to incorporating constructive feedback in the vendor evaluation process. The vendor evaluation process should include a section for documenting subcontractor performance.

    IMPLEMENTED

6. Work with stakeholders to develop an effective project management tool, or improve existing tools, to increase project manager efficiency and opportunities for coordination with departments.

    IMPLEMENTED

Airport Construction Projects Audit

1. The Capital Contracting Officer should develop, document, and implement a procedure related to projects that receive only one bid. This procedure should seek to determine the reason for lack of multiple responses and what course of action best serves the interests of the City.

    IMPLEMENTED

Audit of Management of User Access for the Utility Billing System

Three confidential recommendations for improving and strengthening the management of user access for the Utility Billing System.

IMPLEMENTED
3 recommendations

Audit of Austin Energy Cable Inventory Management

1. The Austin Energy General Manager should ensure established procedures provide consistent guidance to staff for return and handling of all types of cable used by Electric Service Delivery crews.

IMPLEMENTED

2. The Austin Energy General Manager should ensure formal training is provided to all staff on the established procedures for the return and handling of scrap cable.

IMPLEMENTED

3. The Austin Energy General Manager should consider relocating reclamation operations to a location more convenient for all Electric Service Delivery crews, including the Electric Service Delivery yards located at Kramer and St. Elmo warehouses (co-locating reclamation staff and resources with the warehouses at Kramer and St. Elmo).

IMPLEMENTED
offer made for suitable property, but not accepted by seller; alternative solutions currently being considered

4. The Austin Energy General Manager should implement the remaining part of the recommendation regarding documentation of scrap copper quantity made by Austin Energy Internal Audit in the Internal Control Audit – Copper Wire FY2015.

IMPLEMENTED

Audit of Austin Energy Customer Assistance Programs

1. AE management should work with Council to identify a funding source to pay for assistance provided through the Discount Program.

IMPLEMENTED

Audit of Demolition Permits

1. The Development Services Department Director should organize and hold meetings with stakeholders in the City's demolition process in order to identify what the demolition permitting process should accomplish. Stakeholders should include, but not be limited to:

IMPLEMENTED

A. Property owners and tenants;

B. Neighborhood, real estate, and historic landmark groups;

C. Building and demolition contractors; and

D. City staff from the Development Services Department, Planning and Zoning Department (including the Historic Preservation Office), Austin Resource Recovery, Austin Energy, Austin Water, and the City Arborist.

Audit of PARD Cemetery Sales Administration

1. PARD should provide an adequate monitoring and oversight structure for the Cemetery Operations Group to ensure sales and administrative responsibilities are successfully executed.

IMPLEMENTED

Audit of Forestry Management

1. The City's Urban Forestry Board should establish a Comprehensive Urban Forest Plan with the assistance of the Urban Forester, and the Urban Forester should submit a formal standard of care for trees and plants to the Board for review and adoption, in accordance with City Code.

IMPLEMENTED

2. The PARD Director should ensure that the Urban Forester reports at an appropriate organizational level, and has the resources necessary to achieve forestry objectives as required in City Code. Additionally, the PARD Director and the Urban Forester should ensure that operational inefficiencies are corrected.

IMPLEMENTED
PARD corrected operational and resource inefficiencies identified. In 2014, some PARD Urban Forestry staff were reassigned to the Development Services Department.

Audit of PARD Resource Allocation

3. The Director of PARD should ensure registration for all fee-based programs is done in RecTrac, all participants pay for the services they receive, and that payment is made timely or appropriately addressed per policy.

UNDERWAY
revised payment policies and procedures and communicated to staff, but full program participant payments were not received for all services timely or appropriately per policy

4. The Director of PARD should ensure facility service requests are timely completed and that staff collect and report all information regarding each facility maintenance service request work order including the reasons for work order cancelations.

UNDERWAY
revised work order procedures, communicated changes to staff, and started to reduce backlog; working to collect and report all information for maintenance service request work orders

Evidence Disposition Audit

1. The Austin Police Department should ensure that policies and procedures related to drug disposition incorporate all the applicable requirements outlined by the Texas Administrative Code and are clear, fully documented, and monitored as suggested in industry guidance.

UNDERWAY
substantial progress made, a couple of additional requirements need to be addressed