



CITY OF ATLANTA

City Auditor's Office
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November 2010

Performance Audit:

Information Technology General Controls

What We Found

The Department of Information Technology has implemented sufficient controls in 59% of the areas we evaluated, but significant risks remain. We analyzed the department's general controls for 20 of 34 business processes covered by the COBIT framework. We identified areas where policies were inadequate to meet the intent of COBIT or did not match practices. The department lacks disaster recovery and business continuity plans, procedures to monitor security logs, assessment of legal and regulatory requirements and service agreements with other departments. The city has a sound change management policy but technical documents were incomplete for a randomly selected change to the Oracle system. While some processes to manage user accounts are strong, the department does not enforce the city's guidelines for strong passwords in Oracle and more than 200 employees who no longer work for the city retained access to Oracle and the network. We noted similar issues for aviation and watershed applications in previous reports.

The department estimated it needed an additional 85 staff — more than double its current level — in a December 2009 presentation prepared for the new administration and City Council. While we agree that the department appears to be understaffed, omissions and errors in the analysis overstated staffing needs in some areas and understated staffing needs in others. Although the presentation purported to use industry standards to identify staffing needs, more than half of calculations were based on staff's professional judgment and some data used in calculations lack support. We estimate that the department needs an additional 49 staff members based on industry standards and data that we could verify.

We also followed up on the department's progress implementing open audit recommendations and found that 11 of the 16 recommendations that we assessed have been implemented. While the department developed a report to identify potential payroll errors as we recommended, the report we reviewed was incomplete, resulting in undetected errors.

Why We Did This Audit

We undertook this audit because prior audits identified problems with specific information system applications. The city's chief information officer also expressed concerns about inadequate staffing, risks to network security, and lack of disaster recovery and business continuity plans.

What We Recommended

The chief information officer should:

- update department policies to strengthen security and to reflect actual practices
- update the department's strategic plan to reflect the city's current needs
- work with departments to establish service level agreements consistent with the department's updated strategic plan
- evaluate options and seek funding to develop business continuity and disaster recovery plans for the city
- ensure that approval for system changes is documented prior to implementation
- work with the city attorney to identify laws and regulations that affect city data
- work with the Department of Finance to establish a process to reconcile differences between Kronos and Oracle
- work with the Department of Human Resources to ensure the department is notified when employees leave city employment

For more information regarding this report, please contact Eric Palmer at 404.330.6455 or epalmer@atlantaga.gov.