PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Work in progress: Audit description

Office of the Washington State Auditor Pat McCarthy

Opportunities to Improve IT Security at State Agencies and Local Governments

Washington governments and the critical functions they provide – such as public safety, tax collection, social services, and transportation systems – depend on computerized information systems to carry out operations and to process, maintain, and report essential information. The security of these systems and related data are vital to public confidence, the continuity of government operations, and the safety and well-being of the state and its residents.

Across the country and throughout the world, governmental technology is increasingly under attack, leaving people and their sensitive data vulnerable. Those attacks add up, disrupting critical government services, costing taxpayers money and eroding trust in institutions.

In consideration of IT security risks facing WA governments, the State Auditor's Office offers cybersecurity security performance audits with funding through Initiative 900, at no cost to participating governments. Audit results are confidential under state law (RCW 42.56.240); as an added precaution, we also keep the identity of these organizations confidential.

Preliminary scope, objectives and methodology

These audits typically include the following procedures at the state agencies and local governments that participate in the assessment:

- **Technical testing to identify opportunities to make systems more secure.** Real-time security assessments of systems and networks, including identifying and assessing vulnerabilities and whether they could be exploited by internal or external attackers.
- **Comparing current IT security controls to leading practices.** Interviews with key IT staff plus other activities to determine how closely existing practices align with selected leading practices.

These performance audits will seek to answer the following question:

- Can selected agencies and local governments make their IT systems more secure, and better align their IT security practices with leading practices?

Timing: Audit work will continue through June 2027, with results provided to each government as we complete the audit. We will issue a public report covering audits completed at the end each fiscal year.

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updated September 2026