Follow-up on Public Defense: Weak Governance Hinders Improvement

The Department of Public Defense continued its work to ensure a new case management system will improve the accuracy and reliability of its data, however the expected implementation of the new system has been delayed to 2023. The Department of Public Defense's (DPD) new case management system (CMS) was expected to be fully implemented in 2022, however leadership stated that implementation has been delayed due to scheduling difficulties, project manager changes at King County Information Technology (KCIT), as well as extended data migration planning. DPD has continued working with KCIT and the vendor of the new CMS to finalize functions that will simplify data entry processes and will bolster data consistency and accuracy. DPD currently anticipates full implementation of the new CMS will occur in mid-2023.

DPD has not identified metrics to measure departmental progress toward its strategic objectives making it difficult to determine whether efforts are contributing toward department goals. DPD regularly reports on several key metrics regarding workload, however, has struggled to identify reliable measures for its larger strategic efforts. Leadership stated that some items of strategic importance exist upstream and are impacted by factors and agencies beyond DPD's control, making internal measurement difficult. Leadership stated that efforts are ongoing to identify valid, reliable metrics that align with and speak to its progress toward its strategic goals. Of the remaining incomplete recommendations, DPD has made limited progress during this follow-up period.

Of the 13 audit recommendations:

✓ 9 DONE	⋯ 4 PROGRESS	! 0 OPEN
Fully implemented Auditor will no longer monitor.	**Partially implemented** Auditor will continue to monitor.	**Remain unresolved** Auditor will continue to monitor.

Please see details below for implementation status of each recommendation.

Recommendation 1	On December 1, 2020	DONE	✓
Recommendation 2	On December 1, 2020	DONE	✓
Recommendation 3	On November 26, 2019	DONE	✓
Recommendation 4	On December 1, 2021	DONE	✓
Recommendation 5	On December 1, 2021	DONE	✓
Recommendation 6	On December 1, 2021	DONE	✓
Recommendation 7	On December 1, 2021	DONE	✓
Recommendation 8		PROGRESS	⋯

The Department of Public Defense should implement objective performance measures and use these measures to regularly assess employees and the department as a whole relative to department goals and objectives.

STATUS UPDATE: As reported in the previous follow-up, DPD developed evaluation measures for staff performance; however, measuring the department's progress as a whole, relative to the goals and objectives included in its strategic plan, continues to be a challenge and an area of ongoing refinement. DPD leadership tracks and regularly reports on several metrics which impact department workload. However, leadership states that identifying appropriate measures for its strategic efforts remains tricky due to the considerable influence that outside entities have on areas of strategic importance. Leadership stated that work is ongoing to identify appropriate, trackable measures that align with its overarching objectives and that provide valid indications of department progress toward strategic goals.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, DPD should continue its work to define which measures it uses to assess the department as a whole and its progress toward its goals and objectives. The departmental measures should align with the department's strategic plan and should clear ties to the objective performance measure used to assess its employees.

Recommendation 9

On November 26, 2019 · **DONE** ✓

Recommendation 10

PROGRESS ⋯

The Department of Public Defense should work with King County Information Technology to make sure that the new case management system it procures allows for the Director's Office to access and review aggregated division performance data in real time. The system should be able to access data that aligns with department goals and objectives.

STATUS UPDATE: DPD continues to work with KCIT and its vendor to refine the functionalities of the new CMS. The new CMS was intended to be fully implemented in 2022, however personnel changes at KCIT, data migration planning, and scheduling difficulties have delayed the expected implementation to mid-2023. Leadership remains confident that the new CMS will streamline analysis of aggregated department data.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, DPD should continue working with KCIT and the CMS vendor to ensure that the new system will allow the Director's Office to track and report on key metrics that assess DPD's progress as a whole, relative to the goals and objectives included in its strategic plan. This recommendation can be marked "Done" when the new system is implemented and demonstrates these capabilities.

Recommendation 11

PROGRESS ⋯

The Department of Public Defense should develop and implement a plan to improve the accuracy and consistency of data entry across the divisions. Data that is part of this improvement plan should, at a minimum, include data relevant to selected performance measures.

STATUS UPDATE: DPD continues to work with KCIT and the CMS vendor to ensure that the new CMS will improve the accuracy and consistency of data entry across the divisions. As part of this effort, DPD has worked with the vendor to improve data entry functionalities in the new CMS by limiting the number of options available in drop down menus based on the case type, clarifying and simplifying drop down terms, and focusing data on items related to performance. In addition to increasing the accuracy and completeness of data, leadership anticipates that each of these improvements will also make data entry quicker for attorneys once the new CMS is fully implemented in 2023.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, DPD should continue to work with KCIT and the CMS vendor to ensure that the new system will facilitate accurate and consistent data entry across the divisions. This recommendation can be marked "Done" when the new system has resolved this issue.

Recommendation 12 — PROGRESS ⋯

The Department of Public Defense should work with King County Information Technology to make sure that the new case management system it procures addresses data reliability issues for data relevant to implemented performance measures and allows for more consistent time entry.

STATUS UPDATE: DPD continues to work with KCIT and the CMS vendor to identify and implement functions which would ensure that the data entered in the new CMS is reliable for performance measurement. DPD leadership has simplified the forms used to track activities to ensure that staff can enter relevant information more easily, while also expanding specific portions of the forms to allow staff to enter any necessary contextual information. These changes, along with standardized time sheets and entry codes, were made to ensure that the information entered into the new CMS will be more consistent, accurate, and will capture valid indicators of performance.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, DPD should continue working with KCIT and the CMS vendor to ensure that the new system will allow the department leadership to track and report on time data as well as key metrics as identified in employee performance evaluation documents. This recommendation can be marked "Done" when the new system is implemented and demonstrates these capabilities.

Recommendation 13 — On December 1, 2021 — DONE ✓

Grant Dailey conducted this review. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the King County Auditor's Office at KCAO@KingCounty.gov or 206-477-1033.