



**C H I E F
A U D I T O R ' S
O F F I C E**

An Audit Report for:
TCEQ Chairman Jon Niermann
TCEQ Commissioner Emily Lindley
TCEQ Commissioner Bobby Janecka
TCEQ Executive Director Toby Baker

Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Audit Plan

TCEQ Mission Statement

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality strives to protect our state's public health and natural resources consistent with sustainable economic development. Our goal is clean air, clean water, and the safe management of waste.

Chief Auditor's Office Mission Statement

The mission of the Chief Auditor's Office is to provide assurance and advisory services that help the Commissioners and management meet agency goals and objectives. We provide independent and objective information, analyses, and recommendations to assist management in effecting constructive change, managing business risk and/or improving compliance and accountability of the regulated community and business partners.

Jon Niermann, Chairman
Emily Lindley, Commissioner
Bobby Janecka, Commissioner
Toby Baker, Executive Director

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Introduction

The Chief Auditor's Office (CAO) appreciates the opportunity to provide our vision for audit activities at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021.

This proposal is the result of a risk assessment process through which the CAO reviewed risks related to internal agency processes, agency expenditures and revenue, and agency information technology. This document presents our proposed audit and advisory service project areas for FY 2021 and outlines our risk assessment methodology. We believe the areas identified for audit will result in the best return on the audit resource investment.

Purpose and Mission

This audit plan is required by the *Texas Internal Auditing Act (Chapter 2102, Title 10, Govt. Code, Vernon's Texas Codes Annotated)*, *Government Auditing Standards*, and the *International Professional Practices Framework* promulgated by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA). The CAO provides assurance and advisory services that help the Commissioners and management meet agency goals and objectives. We provide independent and objective information, analyses, and recommendations to assist management in effecting constructive change, managing business risk, and/or improving compliance and accountability of the regulated community and business partners.

For more background information on the Chief Auditor's Office, please see **Appendix A**.

Audit Charter and Internal Auditing Definition

The Chief Auditor's Office *Audit Charter* (Charter), approved by the Commission in September 2019, defines the roles of the CAO related to assurance and advisory services performed by the office. The Charter also defines the CAO's mission, scope of activities, responsibilities, authority, independence, professional standards, quality assurance processes, continuing professional development, and reporting relationships.

As defined in the Charter, internal auditing encompasses the examination and evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of the agency's system of internal control and the quality of performance in carrying out the goals and objectives of the agency. The *Texas Internal Auditing Act* adopts the Institute of Internal Auditor's (IIA) definition of internal audit:

An independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organization's operations. It helps an organization accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes.

Types of Engagements

The CAO performs assurance engagements and consulting engagements.

Assurance Engagements

Most assurance engagements undertaken by the CAO are performance audits or Agreed-Upon Procedures (AUPs). Governmental Auditing Standards define performance audits as follows:

"Performance audits provide objective analysis, findings, and conclusions to assist management and those charged with governance and oversight with, among other things, improving program performance and operations, reducing costs, facilitating decision making by parties responsible for overseeing or initiating corrective action, and contributing to public accountability."

AUP engagements are a form of attestation engagement in which CAO staff are engaged by TCEQ management to issue a report of findings based on specific agreed-upon procedures

applied to specific subject matter. Recommendations for corrective action are not included in AUP reports.

Consulting Engagements

Consulting services are advisory in nature and are performed at the request of the client. These engagements are also known as Advisory Services and are intended to add value and improve an organization's governance, risk management, and/or control processes. Consulting engagement reports provide information that can be used by management in its evaluation of Program area processes. CAO staff members perform these engagements pursuant to engagement letters signed by its client and assume no management roles or responsibilities.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment, as defined by the IIA, is a *“systematic process for assessing and integrating professional judgments about probable adverse conditions and/or events.”* The COSO¹ Internal Control – Integrated Framework² states, *“Risk assessment involves a dynamic and interactive process for identifying and assessing risks to the achievement of objectives.”* These risk assessments identify a variety of risks including agency operations, contract management and information technology risks. No additional risks were identified and ranked as “high” that have not been included in the FY 2021 audit plan.

In conducting our risk assessment, the CAO received input from TCEQ Commissioners, Executive Management, Deputy Directors, numerous Division Directors, Area Directors, and Section Managers. Further, selected agency program areas had the opportunity to provide input into our risk assessment through formal facilitated sessions.

During this risk assessment process, the CAO identified the universe of audit risks associated with Agency activities and categorized them. We then risk ranked the identified activities using specific elements of risk related to their category, including fraud risk as appropriate. Using these rankings, we identified potential audit projects for each of the high-risk areas. We prioritized each potential project to determine which projects should be included in the proposed audit plan for the upcoming fiscal year.

For Assurance Service purposes, we identified the universe of auditable activities primarily as those activities conducted to address the strategies funded by the *General Appropriations Act* and fees collected by the TCEQ. This universe of auditable activities includes the information technology systems and processes that support the agency's activities. Also included in the universe of auditable activities were all fees collected by the TCEQ and all contracts executed by the agency. Those fees that were identified as high risk and the agency's contracting processes were included as proposed audit projects.

We will update our risk assessment as additional information is obtained and expenditures occur throughout the coming fiscal year. Our continuous evaluation of agency risks will ensure the most efficient use of audit resources.

The risk assessment process included review of the project areas by the Chief Auditor to assure adequate coverage of risk and to avoid inappropriate duplication of coverage.

Alternative projects were also identified. These projects are additional areas that we believe could benefit from the use of audit resources but did not rise to the top of the list of potential audit areas. We seek approval to use them as alternative projects in circumstances where additional or substitute projects are required.

¹ The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) is an initiative of five organizations that provide frameworks and guidance on enterprise risk management, internal control and fraud deterrence. The organizations include: America Accounting Association, American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Financial Executives International, The Association of Accountants and Financial Professionals in Business, and The Institute of Internal Auditors. (source: www.coso.org)

² COSO, *Internal Control – Integrated Framework – Executive Summary* (May 2013), 4.

We will consult with the Commission and executive management to adjust the plan as needed based on priorities, management requests, workloads, changes in operations, and availability of audit resources.

Through approval of this proposal, the Commission authorizes the Chairman to approve any amendments to the audit plan that become necessary.

Proposed Audit Projects for Fiscal Year 2021

Below are the proposed projects for Audit Services, Information Technology Audits, Advisory Services, and Office-wide Projects to be conducted by the CAO.

Proposed Audit Services Projects:

FY 2020 Carry Over Projects

An Audit of the Texas Volkswagen Mitigation Program Grant Award Process
System Development Life Cycle Audit in a Selected Program Area

FY 2021 Audit Services Projects

Expedited Air Permit Time and Fee Billing Processes
Agency Compliance with Provisions of Texas Administrative Code §202
Review of the TCEQ Ethics Program
Contract Procurement Processes
Employee Onboarding Documentation Review
Review of Texas Emissions Reduction Funding
User Access Reviews of Critical Information Technology Systems (Up to 3 Projects)
Documentation Compliance Audits of Selected Permit Applications (Up to 3 Projects)

Proposed Advisory Services Projects:

A Review of Accounts Payable Functions in the Water Quality Planning Division Support Section

Alternative Projects:

A Review of CAPPs Implementation - Human Resources and Payroll Information
System Development Lifecycle Audits for Selected Information Technology Systems
Additional Consulting Services Engagements

Other CAO Office-wide Projects:

Audit Follow-ups (Fall and Spring)
CAO Quarterly Reports
Client Assistance/Consulting
CAO Annual Internal Audit Report FY 2020
FY 2022 Annual Audit Plan
Special Requests from the Commissioners or Executive Director
Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Investigations

Acceptable Level of Risk

We believe that completing the projects proposed above, or appropriate alternatives, will reasonably cover the risks identified by the risk assessment. While the list of proposed projects results from our consideration of a wide-ranging scope of auditable activities, it does not address or provide coverage for all TCEQ components or systems. Our goal is to optimize our resources to provide reasonable coverage in the areas we believe require the most attention.

Due to a variety of factors, some significant activities that might warrant review may not be carried forward to the list of proposed audit projects, but they did receive consideration. Ultimately, we cannot address every risk area. It is important for the Commission and executive management to understand the limitations of the audit coverage and the attendant risks for areas not audited. In our opinion, this listing of proposed projects allocates audit resources to the most important priorities and significant risks of TCEQ and allows flexibility to address other risk areas that may become known during the fiscal year.

However, according to the *Texas Internal Auditing Act*, it is the governing board's responsibility to conclude whether resources are adequate to address the identified risks. Specifically, *Senate Bill 1694* of the 78th legislative session amended the *Texas Internal Auditing Act* to require the governing board of a state agency to periodically review the resources dedicated to the audit program and determine if adequate resources exist to ensure that risks identified in the annual risk assessment are adequately covered within a reasonable time frame. The Chief Auditor asserts that staff resources are adequate to address the high-risk areas linked to proposed audit projects. Any additional audit coverage would require additional staff resources.

Besides staff resources, the CAO is provided with an operating budget to cover administrative costs. In the past, when additional resources have been requested for specific audit needs, those resources have generally been made available. The Chief Auditor is confident that if it becomes necessary to request additional resources that our request will be addressed in good faith.

Contingency

While we will always work to address any appropriate special requests, we have specifically set aside resources for special requests from the Commission and/or the Executive Director.

Planning, Administrative & Other

A percentage of the total available audit hours are allocated to planning, administrative and other special projects. These projects include advisory services, follow-up, and external auditor liaison duties.

Other Services

We plan to continue to have audit staff members participating ex-officio in agency committees and work groups as needed and directed by the Commission or requested by executive management. We provide advice and suggestions on management issues, concerns, and review draft policies and procedures upon request.

Follow-Up

Follow-up is an important part of our audit effort and is required by professional standards. The status of all recommendations is presented in Fall and Spring follow-up reports to the Commission and executive management. Follow-up reporting continues until all recommended actions and management action plans are implemented or the specific risk reported is otherwise mitigated or accepted.

External Auditor Liaison

The Chief Audit Executive serves as the liaison with the Texas State Auditor's Office (SAO), the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of the Inspector General (EPA-OIG), and other external audit groups having oversight responsibility for TCEQ activities. Audit staff will assist these external entities on their projects as appropriate. Our goal in the role of liaison is to provide assistance to the extent that professional and organizational reporting responsibilities allow. The CAO will conduct examinations in a manner that allows for maximum audit coordination and efficiency.

Management Controls

Management controls are most effective when they are integrated into the organization's infrastructure and are a fundamental part of management's philosophy. Management is responsible for establishing a system of internal/management controls adequate to reasonably assure that established objectives are accomplished. The COSO *Internal Control - Integrated Framework* states, "Internal Control is a process, effected by an entity's board of directors, management, and other personnel, designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of objectives..." Performance audits performed by the CAO will include evaluation of established internal controls that are identified as significant to engagement objectives.

Closing

The CAO thanks the TCEQ's Commission, management, and staff for their involvement in the development of this proposal. We look forward to helping TCEQ meet its objectives during this upcoming fiscal year. For further information on the CAO or the FY 2021 Annual Audit Plan, please contact Chief Auditor Mike Hardison, at (512) 239-1322 or by email at mike.hardison@tceq.texas.gov.

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Appendix A

About the Chief Auditor's Office

Organization and Staffing

For FY 2021, the CAO has been authorized 15 full-time equivalent positions: A Chief Auditor, three (3) audit Work Leads, one (1) Senior Investigator, one (1) Executive Assistant, and nine (9) auditors. Our FY 2021 Annual Audit Plan was developed based on the assumption that these staff resources would continue to be available for the remainder of the fiscal year.

CAO staff members collectively have 108 years of agency experience, 205.5 years of auditing experience, and 18 professional licenses and certifications including:

- Certified Public Accountant (CPA)
- Certified Internal Auditor (CIA)
- Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA)
- Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE)
- Certified Government Auditing Professional (CGAP)

Professional Organizations

CAO staff members actively participate in professional auditing and information systems organizations. These groups are excellent sources for obtaining information on auditing, accounting, and other professional issues:

- Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA)
- Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA)
- Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE)
- Texas State Agency Internal Audit Forum (SAIAF)

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is an important component in providing high quality auditing services. We conduct supervisory and quality assurance reviews of each project and the resulting audit report. Additionally, professional standards require audit departments to have a periodic external quality assurance (peer) review. The most recent peer review report received by the CAO was dated as of May 2020. The CAO received a rating of "Pass/Generally Conforms" from its Peer Reviewers. That rating is the highest possible Peer Review rating and represents their conclusion that the CAO's system of quality control has been suitably designed and complied with to provide it with reasonable assurance that engagements are performed and reported in conformity with professional standards and applicable legal and regulatory requirements in all material respects. Our next review will be completed during FY 2023.

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