



Office of the Washington State Auditor  
Pat McCarthy

# Accountability Audit Report

## Benton County

For the period January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021

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**Office of the Washington State Auditor  
Pat McCarthy**

May 4, 2023

Board of Commissioners  
Benton County  
Prosser, Washington

**Report on Accountability**

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you to promote accountability, integrity and openness in government. The Office of the Washington State Auditor takes seriously our role of providing state and local governments with assurance and accountability as the independent auditor of public accounts. In this way, we strive to help government work better, cost less, deliver higher value and earn greater public trust.

Independent audits provide essential accountability and transparency for County operations. This information is valuable to management, the governing body and public stakeholders when assessing the government's stewardship of public resources.

Attached is our independent audit report on the County's compliance with applicable requirements and safeguarding of public resources for the areas we examined. We appreciate the opportunity to work with your staff and value your cooperation during the audit.

Sincerely,

Pat McCarthy, State Auditor  
Olympia, WA

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## AUDIT RESULTS

### Results in brief

This report describes the overall results and conclusions for the areas we examined. In those selected areas, County operations complied, in all material respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, and its own policies, and provided adequate controls over the safeguarding of public resources.

In keeping with general auditing practices, we do not examine every transaction, activity, policy, internal control, or area. As a result, no information is provided on the areas that were not examined.

### About the audit

This report contains the results of our independent accountability audit of Benton County from January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021.

Management is responsible for ensuring compliance and adequate safeguarding of public resources from fraud, loss or abuse. This includes the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls relevant to these objectives.

This audit was conducted under the authority of RCW 43.09.260, which requires the Office of the Washington State Auditor to examine the financial affairs of all local governments. Our audit involved obtaining evidence about the County's use of public resources, compliance with state laws and regulations and its own policies and procedures, and internal controls over such matters. The procedures performed were based on our assessment of risks in the areas we examined.

Based on our risk assessment for the year ended December 31, 2021, the areas examined were those representing the highest risk of fraud, loss, abuse, or noncompliance. We examined the following areas during this audit period:

- Procurement – public works, purchases, professional services, on-call contracts, and change orders
- Payroll – electronic funds transfers
- Payroll – Sheriff and Correctional Departments – gross wages
- Cost allocation plan – equitable distribution of indirect costs
- Compliance with State grants – County Arterial Preservation Program, Development Disabilities Services, Child Support Enforcement, Consolidated Juvenile Services and Truancy, At Risk Youth and Child in Need of Services
- Sheriff Department – citation reconciliations
- Accounts receivable – billing to other jurisdictions for jail services,

- Use of restricted funds – county roads and rural county sales tax
- Surplus equipment – disposition and receipt of sales proceeds
- Open public meetings – compliance with minutes, meetings and executive session requirements
- Financial condition – reviewing for indications of financial distress

## RELATED REPORTS

### **Financial**

Our opinion on the County's financial statements and compliance with federal grant program requirements is provided in a separate report, which includes the County's financial statements. That report is available on our website, <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

That report includes a finding for a material weakness in internal controls over financial reporting regarding infrastructure assets.

### **Federal grant programs**

We evaluated internal controls and tested compliance with the federal program requirements, as applicable, for the County's major federal programs, which are listed in the Schedule of Findings and Questioned Costs section of the separate financial statement and single audit report. That report includes federal findings regarding a lack of internal controls to ensure compliance with suspension and debarment and procurement requirements. That report is available on our website, <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE COUNTY

Benton County was incorporated in 1905 and currently serves about 217,000 citizens. An elected, three-member Board of Commissioners governs the County. Additional elected positions include Assessor, Auditor, Clerk, Treasurer, Prosecuting Attorney, Sheriff, Coroner, five District Court Judges and seven Superior Court Judges.

About 737 employees provide an array of services including: law enforcement and judicial services, construction and maintenance of roads and bridges, health and social services, cultural and recreational facilities, planning and zoning services, animal control, and general administrative services. In 2021, governmental revenues and expenditures were \$161 million and \$132 million, respectively.

### Contact information related to this report

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*Information current as of report publish date.*

### Audit history

You can find current and past audit reports for Benton County at <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.

## ABOUT THE STATE AUDITOR'S OFFICE

The State Auditor's Office is established in the Washington State Constitution and is part of the executive branch of state government. The State Auditor is elected by the people of Washington and serves four-year terms.

We work with state agencies, local governments and the public to achieve our vision of increasing trust in government by helping governments work better and deliver higher value.

In fulfilling our mission to provide citizens with independent and transparent examinations of how state and local governments use public funds, we hold ourselves to those same standards by continually improving our audit quality and operational efficiency, and by developing highly engaged and committed employees.

As an agency, the State Auditor's Office has the independence necessary to objectively perform audits, attestation engagements and investigations. Our work is designed to comply with professional standards as well as to satisfy the requirements of federal, state and local laws. The Office also has an extensive quality control program and undergoes regular external peer review to ensure our work meets the highest possible standards of accuracy, objectivity and clarity.

Our audits look at financial information and compliance with federal, state and local laws for all local governments, including schools, and all state agencies, including institutions of higher education. In addition, we conduct performance audits and cybersecurity audits of state agencies and local governments, as well as state whistleblower, fraud and citizen hotline investigations.

The results of our work are available to everyone through the more than 2,000 reports we publish each year on our website, [www.sao.wa.gov](http://www.sao.wa.gov). Additionally, we share regular news and other information via an email subscription service and social media channels.

We take our role as partners in accountability seriously. The Office provides training and technical assistance to governments both directly and through partnerships with other governmental support organizations.

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