



Arizona Criminal Justice Commission

June 16, 2016

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Pima County Chief Probation Officer

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HESTON SILBERT
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VACANT
Sheriff

Executive Director
John A. Blackburn, Jr.

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Ms. Debbie Davenport, Auditor General
State of Arizona
2910 North 44th Street, Suite 410
Phoenix, AZ 85018

Dear Ms. Davenport:

On behalf of the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC), below is our response to the performance audit and sunset review report of the ACJC. The Commission and its staff sincerely appreciate the time and effort of your audit team in understanding the unique role the agency plays in sustaining and enhancing Arizona's criminal justice system. I wish to thank the auditors for their professionalism and thorough review of the work conducted by this agency.

ACJC recognizes that the purpose of the audit it is to identify potential areas for improvement within the agency and, in general, agrees with the recommendations proposed by the performance audit and sunset review. ACJC is confident implementing the recommendations identified in the report will result in the Commission better fulfilling its legislative mandate and mission.

ACJC also appreciates your office's agreeing to our proposed changes to more accurately reflect the integral role that the Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) plays in providing research and support to all of ACJC's program areas and important criminal justice stakeholders across the state. The work of the SAC plays a key role in the efforts to effect statewide improvements to Arizona's criminal justice system and programs that are having a significantly positive impact on its citizens.

Additionally, ACJC appreciates your acknowledgement of the exemplary service provided by the SAC from stakeholders and national organizations – including two national awards from the National Criminal Justice Association and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program.

We look forward to continuing to work with your office as we progress through the remainder of the sunset review process. Below is the agency response to each recommendation.

Sincerely,

John A. Blackburn, Jr.
Executive Director

Arizona Criminal Justice Commission Response to Auditor General's Performance Audit and Sunset Review Report

Performance Audit Finding 1: Commission should develop strategic approach to better use its research center.

Recommendation 1.1: The Commission should establish an oversight process for its research center similar to the process it has established for its grant program areas to ensure that its research center can better assist it in fulfilling its mission and that it uses the research center's research to make system-wide improvements. Specifically the Commission should:

1.1a: Establish a committee for its research center consisting of a few Commission members, and the committee should then work with the research center to develop research priorities and/or a strategy to guide its research activities. The priorities and/or strategy should then be presented to and approved by the entire Commission.

Agency issues or concerns: Although Commission staff agree with the concept of the recommendation, some of the details of the recommendation would be dependent on Commission approval. The ACJC Chair has agreed to begin the process of establishing a Research Committee.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

1.1b: Receive regular updates from its research center on its progress in accomplishing the Commission's approved strategy.

Agency issues or concerns: None.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

1.1c: Use information from its research center, including report recommendations, to recommend policy changes for the State's criminal justice system – whether in statute, rule, agency policies, or general approaches – and coordinate efforts with other state or local criminal justice agencies to pursue implementation of these changes, consistent with its strategic approach.

Agency issues or concerns: None.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Recommendation 1.2: The Commission should take steps to resolve issues with its research center's current reports to help ensure its research center can assist it in fulfilling its mission. Specifically, the Commission should:

1.2a: Work with its research center to determine if all statutorily required reports are useful and based on this determination, propose revising and/or eliminating statutorily required reports that are not useful.

Agency issues or concerns: None.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

1.2b: Ensure its crime trends report and other reports include recommendations, as required and as appropriate for enhancing the criminal justice system.

Agency issues or concerns: None.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

1.2c: Ensure that the research center focuses its crime trends and other reports on specific trends or problems, the reasons for these problems, and best practices to address them to assess the productivity and effectiveness of the criminal justice system and to help facilitate making meaningful recommendations.

Agency issues or concerns: None.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Recommendation 1.3: As part of its strategic approach for its research center, the Commission should assess the extent that the research center can expand its work to include assessments of emerging trends in the criminal justice system.

Agency issues or concerns: In the performance audit draft report, comparison is made between the Arizona SAC and the Illinois SAC in regards to that agency's ability to include assessments of emerging trends in the criminal justice system. ACJC appreciates the efforts taken in the report to highlight the differences in agency budgets and staff size so that readers can accurately compare the two agencies. Specifically, the Illinois SAC's staff and budget are both approximately four times larger than the Arizona SAC which allows them to conduct this type of work.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Recommendation 1.4: The Commission should assess the resource needs of its research center. This assessment should include a documented workload analysis that compares the research center's workload, including an estimate of future workload, with staff resources. The Commission should then take appropriate action based on the results of the analysis. For example, the Commission could use the workload analysis to determine how to maximize its allocated resources and/or work with the Legislature to request additional appropriations to hire more staff or contract for additional staff resources as needed to address temporary workload fluctuations, as appropriate.

Agency issues or concerns: None.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Performance Audit Finding 2: Commission has established effective grant-awarding and monitoring processes, but should formalize coordination efforts in one area.

Recommendation 2.1: The Commission should develop a formal, written process for its grant program staff to annually review with the DPS' federal victim assistance grant program staff, and other victim assistance stakeholders as appropriate, the estimated amount of state and federal monies available and collaborate on developing coordinated funding priorities to address victim assistance needs state-wide.

Agency issues or concerns: None.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Recommendation 2.2: The Commission should ensure that this formal process directs staff to continue to work with the Commission's Crime Victim Services Committee to assess victim needs state-wide with the DPS and other victim assistance stakeholders and develop funding priorities.

Agency issues or concerns: None.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Recommendation 2.3: The Commission's Crime Victim Services Committee should annually share its assessment and propose revisions to its funding priorities, as necessary, with the entire Commission.

Agency issues or concerns: None.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Sunset Factors

Recommendation 1: The Commission should, in a public meeting, assess its membership to determine if its membership should be modified to more fully fulfill its mission and to better serve the entire State. The Commission should document its official assessment and, if the assessment determines that the Commission's membership should be modified, it should work with the Legislature to revise the Commission's membership.

Agency issues or concerns: None.

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Recommendation 2: The Commission should seek the necessary legislative changes regarding the reporting requirements it cannot fulfill for the statutorily required sexual assault report.

Agency issues or concerns: None

Agency response: The findings of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.