

The California State Auditor released the following report today:

Judicial Branch Procurement

Although the Judicial Council Needs to Strengthen Controls Over Its Information Systems, Its Procurement Practices Generally Comply With Applicable Requirements

BACKGROUND

Comprised of the Supreme Court, courts of appeal, superior—or trial—courts in each of the State's 58 counties, and administrative and policy entities, including the Judicial Council of California (Judicial Council), California's judicial branch is a separate and independent branch of state government. In 2011, the State enacted the California Judicial Branch Contract Law (judicial contract law) that requires judicial branch entities (judicial entities) to follow procurement and contracting policies that are consistent with the California Public Contract Code and substantially similar to other state requirements.

KEY FINDINGS

During our audit of the Judicial Council's procurement practices and its implementation of the judicial contract law, we noted the following:

- The Judicial Council corrected the deficiencies in its procurement and payment practices that we found in 2013 by implementing our recommendations and improving its procurement practices.
 - ✓ In contrast to our December 2013 audit, the Judicial Council appears to be using a competitive procurement process when required.
 - ✓ It has improved its execution of the noncompetitive procurement process—it enhanced its internal review process to ensure staff use the noncompetitive process only when appropriate.
- Although the Judicial Council's judicial contracting manual is generally consistent with state contracting requirements, it does not include standards related to minimum fuel economy for state vehicle purchases.
- After nearly two years, the Judicial Council continues to have fundamental weaknesses in controls over its information systems. It has adopted a framework for the controls but has not fully implemented the controls needed to address the weaknesses and did not provide a projected date for full implementation.
 - ✓ Although the Judicial Council's request for additional funding for information system control enhancements has not been approved, we question whether other available resources could be used for this purpose.
 - ✓ The information systems contain confidential or sensitive information such as court case management records, human resources data, and financial data.
 - ✓ Prolonged implementation of information system controls and the pervasive weaknesses in the existing controls continues to expose the security and availability of its information systems to compromise.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommended the Judicial Council update the judicial contracting manual to include the required minimum fuel economy standards for vehicle purchases. We also recommended that the Judicial Council develop a corrective action plan by February 2016 and fully implement its framework of information system controls by June 2016. Further, the Judicial Council should continue to provide guidance and routinely follow up with the superior courts to assist in their efforts to make the necessary improvements to their information system controls.