



The Facilities Management Division Custodial Services performance audit evaluated whether staffing and supervision practices manage staffing resources efficiently and promote effectiveness, consistency, accountability, and customer satisfaction.

Overall, the audit found that Custodial Services needs to improve its management practices by conducting a formal assessment of custodial workload and productivity, increasing the frequency of communication with tenants, and implementing an objective tool for evaluating custodial performance. Our recommendations will improve management's ability to develop a custodial service level that matches staffing resources, predict the impact of staffing changes, provide tenants and custodians with objective information about service level and workload decisions, and evaluate the performance of individual custodians.

The audit recognizes that Custodial Services has made recent changes to improve performance and accountability. Toward the end of our audit, Custodial Services changed its approach to supervising the custodians working in downtown Seattle buildings to increase oversight and communication between supervisors and custodians. The audit recommends that FMD continue these efforts and monitor the impact of its new approach.

The County Executive concurred with the audit's five recommendations.

Background

Custodial Services is organizationally situated in the Facilities Management Division (FMD) of the Department of Executive Services. FMD custodians are responsible for providing services to over 2.2 million square feet in 40 buildings. Custodial responsibilities are specified in FMD's Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with individual tenants. These agreements establish the baseline service level custodians provide in all areas of responsibility, such as trash pickup, restroom cleaning, and vacuuming, among others.

Workload and Staffing

FMD's process for setting its baseline level of service and allocating staffing resources is not based on an analysis of productivity or an inventory of tasks by area. Instead, service level and staffing decisions are based on managers' professional judgment. Further, FMD has not developed SLAs that document the varying level of service provided in different buildings.

Tenant Satisfaction Custodial Accountability

Tenant satisfaction with Custodial Services varies by building location, with tenants in outlying buildings generally reporting higher satisfaction than tenants in downtown buildings. Unsatisfied tenants emphasized the need for increased custodial accountability in meeting the requirements of SLAs and more frequent opportunities to provide FMD with feedback.

FMD could improve staff accountability and performance by increasing the consistency of assignments, developing objective workload expectations, and implementing a meaningful performance evaluation process.

Comparisons with Benchmarks

The average cost of FMD Custodial Services is higher than local or national averages. Such costs are due, in part, to the higher average salary earned by FMD custodians. Further, Custodial Services' staffing level is below national averages in downtown Seattle buildings and exceeds the national average in outlying buildings. Finally, the base level of service provided by FMD is generally comparable to that provided by peers, although it is lower in the frequency and depth of dusting, vacuuming, and mopping.

Recommendations

The report includes recommendations to improve the accountability, transparency, and effectiveness of Custodial Services:

- Conduct a formal assessment of workload that includes an inventory of tasks by area and an analysis of hours required to complete all tasks.
- Develop base service levels that reflect the staffing resources assigned to individual tenants.
- Improve communication with tenants and use of tenant feedback.
- Continue to improve approach to assigning and supervising custodians in downtown buildings.
- Implement a meaningful employee performance evaluation process and ensure supervisors conduct evaluations consistently.

Executive Response

The County Executive concurred with all five of the report's recommendations.