



This performance audit of the King County Sheriff's Office (Sheriff's Office) reviewed four major areas. First, we analyzed how reductions in staffing levels for the Patrol and Criminal Investigations Divisions compared with the decrease in calls for services resulting from decreasing crime rates and the loss of portions of the unincorporated area due to annexations and incorporations. We found that FTE staffing reductions for the Patrol Division have been relatively proportional to the reduction in calls for service, but scheduled patrol staffing levels have not decreased as much, resulting in an increase in the use of overtime to cover patrol staffing posts.

Second, we compared staffing, compensation, and costs of the Sheriff's Office services to the unincorporated area with staffing, compensation, and costs for unincorporated area services in six other large sheriff departments in Washington state. The Sheriff's Office has relatively high staffing, compensation, and costs.

Third, we analyzed the growth of staffing costs over time and found that staffing cost growth has accelerated since the adoption of the 2008-2012 collective bargaining agreement and estimate that agreement resulted in almost \$12 million in additional costs in 2010.

Finally, we reviewed the criteria the used the Sheriff's Office to determine whether services provided on a countywide basis are provided free-of-charge or for a fee when performed in a city and found that the criteria for determining this are informal and, in some cases, inadequate to explain why some services performed in cities are provided free-of-charge or for a fee.

Patrol and Criminal Investigations Staffing

Over the past ten years, annexations and incorporations have decreased the population in unincorporated King County, and have resulted in a 25 percent reduction in the number of calls for service in the unincorporated area. During the same period, the number of FTE deputies available to serve the unincorporated area has been reduced by 28 percent. However, the number of scheduled patrol posts has been reduced by only 12 percent, resulting in a significant increase in the amount of overtime used to cover scheduled patrol posts.

Those staffing decisions and the reduction in calls for service resulted in a decrease in response time and more time available for deputies to perform proactive policing activities. However, the Sheriff's Office does not have goals or measures to assess the effectiveness of proactive policing.

We also found that Criminal Investigations Division (CID) staffing has been reduced by 42 FTE's, but the Sheriff's Office does not measure workload level. Thus, it was not possible to compare CID staffing with workload.

Unincorporated Area Staffing, Compensation, and Cost Comparisons

When we compared Sheriff's Office staffing, compensation, and costs for serving the unincorporated area with unincorporated area staffing, compensation, and costs in six other large Washington Sheriff's departments, we found that the cost of unincorporated area police services per 1,000 unincorporated area residents was highest in King County. This is explained by King County having the second highest unincorporated area staffing per 1,000 residents and the highest compensation per deputy.

Growth of Staffing Costs

Staffing costs accelerated after the adoption of the 2008-2012 collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with the Police Officer's Guild. In addition to the 5 percent annual pay increases, the CBA included several other provisions that have increased costs. We estimate that the impact of the CBA on 2010 costs to be \$11.8 million. We found areas for improving the collective bargaining process including the need for better analysis of compensation with comparable jurisdictions, and how fiscal impacts are presented on fiscal notes.

Countywide Police Services

Criteria for determining whether police service provided countywide are provided free-of-charge or for a fee within cities are informal and in some cases, inadequate.

Recommendations

The report includes seven recommendations intended to address the findings. Five of the recommendations are directed to the Sheriff. These include developing a patrol-staffing plan, a plan that identifies goals for proactive policing activities, continuing to pursue economies of scale in patrol, better measurement of CID workload, and developing formal criteria for determining which countywide services should be provided for a fee or free-of-charge when provided within cities. Two recommendations relating to the collective bargaining process are directed to the Executive.

Sheriff/Executive Response

The Sheriff concurred or partially concurred with four of the five recommendations directed to the Sheriff's Office and did not concur with one recommendation. The Executive concurred with both of the recommendations directed to the Executive.