





# KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

APRIL 2, 2021

## Follow-up on Emergency Medical Services: Actions needed to address upcoming retirements and workforce diversity

**EMS's strategic planning efforts have been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the division has made progress toward increasing workforce diversity.** EMS is collecting information to support efforts to recruit and develop a workforce that better reflects the race and gender profile of King County communities. Specifically, EMS worked with the King County Fire Chiefs Association to hire a consultant who reviewed fire departments' recruitment plans, training, retention, culture, and data, among other things. EMS indicates that they are planning to build on this baseline to work with partner agencies to set workforce diversity goals and metrics, including ensuring that agencies collect race and gender data of staff and job applicants as we recommended.

Of the 5 audit recommendations:

 <b>3</b> <b>DONE</b>	 <b>1</b> <b>PROGRESS</b>	 <b>1</b> <b>OPEN</b>
<b>Fully implemented</b> Auditor will no longer monitor.	<b>Partially implemented</b> Auditor will continue to monitor.	<b>Remain unresolved</b> Auditor will continue to monitor.

Please see below for details on the implementation status of these recommendations.

## Recommendation 1

PROGRESS



**The Emergency Medical Services Division should work with levy partners on developing, implementing, and documenting strategic workforce planning practices, such as the practices identified in this report.**

STATUS UPDATE: EMS made progress on this recommendation before the current COVID-19 pandemic by analyzing training costs and increasing levy funding for paramedics as well as expanding training opportunities for Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). Partner agencies hired a significant number of EMTs in order to maintain the workforce as older staff retired. In January and February 2020, levy partners formed a work group to finish implementing this recommendation. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit at the end of February, the EMS division and its partners had to shift focus to navigating through the pandemic as the first jurisdiction in the nation to deal with COVID-19. Handling the demands of COVID-19 required EMS and its regional partners to pause strategic workforce planning efforts. Pandemic response resulted in unanticipated costs and potential long-term budget impacts as well as complicating logistics for additional initial training courses to meet the influx of new EMTs.

EMS staff indicated that they remain committed to focusing on workforce strategic planning throughout this 2020-2025 levy span. However, four staff departures in the past year in addition to the overwhelming workload responding the pandemic has hampered their bandwidth to move forward. Once EMS fills its current vacant positions and staff time shifts away from pandemic response, the division will have some capacity to resume work on this recommendation.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, the division should build on the progress made pre-COVID to facilitate strategic workforce planning with partner agencies. This work should be done in time to continue implementing strategies during the 2020-2025 levy and incorporate strategic plans to maintain adequate workforce in the 2026-2031 EMS levy. It should include the specific workforce planning practices we detailed in the audit: analyzing data on EMT and paramedic attrition, hiring, and training and conducting cost analysis.

## Recommendation 2

On August 2, 2019

DONE



## Recommendation 3

OPEN





**To mitigate risk and obtain key information to inform workforce diversity efforts, the Emergency Medical Services Division should modify its contracts with partner agencies to require them to collect, maintain, and report data on self-identified race and gender of staff and applicants.**

STATUS UPDATE: The EMS Division combined efforts with the King County Fire Chiefs Association (KCFCA) to collect baseline information on race and gender data partner agencies currently maintain about their staff and applicants. The division anticipates receiving results from the consultant responsible for this work in spring 2021.

EMS and KCFCA will use this information to determine how regional partners can modify their practices to collect consistent data. They will also identify workforce diversity goals and measures.

WHAT REMAINS: EMS needs to ensure partner agencies collect, maintain, and report data on self-identified race and gender of staff and applicants.

Recommendation 4	On August 2, 2019	DONE	
Recommendation 5	On August 2, 2019	DONE	

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Luc Poon conducted this review. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the King County Auditor's Office at [KCAO@KingCounty.gov](mailto:KCAO@KingCounty.gov) or 206-477-1033.