



# KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

DECEMBER 1, 2022

## Follow-up on King County Sheriff's Office Overtime Audit

**The King County Sheriff's Office moved to a new 4/10 unincorporated patrol schedule, completing a key recommendation, enabling better management of overtime.** The Sheriff's Office successfully piloted a new staffing schedule underway in Precinct 4 during the last audit follow-up (December 2021). Based on the pilot, and in conjunction with moving to biweekly pay—long a goal of payroll administrators—all Sheriff's Office unincorporated patrol precincts moved to 4/10 schedules in 2022. Doing so aligns unincorporated patrol and contract partners with the same base schedule and allows for better administration of overtime by providing periodic schedule overlaps. As explained in the audit (June 2017), these overlaps increase efficiency by allowing for ancillary duties such as training and weapons certification to occur as part of standard patrol schedules, rather than requiring backfill overtime. In addition, because Sheriff's Office patrol officers are now consistently working the same schedule, these opportunities may extend across individual units and locations.

**The Sheriff's Office made no progress addressing four of five remaining recommendations, reverting those four to "open" status and continuing overtime-related risks.** The audit included two pairs of recommendations addressing two important concepts in managing overtime risks. One pair (Recommendations 1 and 2) addresses the need to capture off-duty hours in time and labor data and consider those hours when choosing who to staff overtime work. Because the risks from overwork are present regardless of whether the work is on-duty, off-duty, or overtime, doing so helps limit those risks when assigning overtime shifts. The second pair (Recommendations 6 and 7) addresses the need for a staffing model with documented essential elements—including the number of shifts and the assumed relief factor—and accurate personnel information. An effective staffing model identifies needs and enables managers to target limited resources rather than purely reacting to gaps with overtime—even when staffing is severely constrained.

In the last audit follow-up (December 2021), the Sheriff's Office had made minimal progress on these recommendations since the previous follow-up of August 2020. As we explained then, "these are long-standing problems; without focused effort, [the Sheriff's Office] will continue to bear the risks of overwork and inefficient use of overtime." Unfortunately, this trend has continued, and we are reverting all four recommendations to "open" status. Since the audit, the main barrier identified by Sheriff's Office staff to completing these recommendations has been from relying on implementation by third-parties—consultant staffing analysis and vendor engagement for changes to their time and labor system, ATLAS. As these efforts have proved challenging, progress on the recommendations has been limited. However, completing the four recommendations—now all over five years old—does not require advanced data analysis or consultant work. Focused work by the Sheriff's Office on simple, effective approaches could complete these recommendations and realize their operational benefits.



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**Additional recommendations are addressed in a parallel audit-follow-up letter.** The overtime audit was initially conducted in two phases, with the first phase focused on Sheriff’s Office management of overtime, and the second phase focused on technical aspects of overtime pay administration in King County payroll systems. Together, both audit phases contain 20 recommendations. This letter addresses the 12 recommendations from the first phase; the remaining eight recommendations (Recommendations 13–20) are addressed in an accompanying audit follow-up letter.

Of the 12 audit recommendations:

	<b>7</b> <b>DONE</b>		<b>0</b> <b>PROGRESS</b>		<b>4</b> <b>OPEN</b>		<b>1</b> <b>CLOSED</b>
<b>Fully implemented</b> <b>Auditor will no longer monitor.</b>		<b>Partially implemented</b> <b>Auditor will continue to monitor.</b>		<b>Remain unresolved</b> <b>Auditor will continue to monitor.</b>		<b>No longer applicable</b> <b>Auditor will no longer monitor.</b>	

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

<b>Recommendation 1</b>	<b>OPEN</b>	
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**The King County Sheriff’s Office should ensure that off-duty hours are tracked in its scheduling program.**

STATUS UPDATE: At the time of the audit (June 2017), the Sheriff’s Office concurred in the recommendation, but timed implementation “as resources allow,” given the challenges of its time and labor system, ATLAS. This is now the fourth audit follow-up since the audit; in each of the previous follow-ups (April 2019, August 2020, and December 2021), the Sheriff’s Office planned to update ATLAS in the coming year with the function to track off-duty hours. During the last audit follow-up (December 2021), Sheriff’s Office staff explained that implementing biweekly pay was its primary focus, but that addressing off-duty hours reporting and including total hours in overtime assignments would occur in 2022. In response to this follow-up, Sheriff’s Office leaders again stated plans to address work tracking in the upcoming year, referencing ATLAS as “cumbersome to update and program new functionality.”

Given the ongoing lack of progress, this recommendation (and Recommendation 2, following) are reverting from “progress” to “open.” It has been five years since the audit, and ATLAS’s limitations were known at that time. As noted in previous audit follow-ups, the Sheriff’s Office has already developed methods for charging third-parties’ time for use of patrol vehicles during off-duty work; similar methods might help address tracking off-duty work relative to overtime assignments (see Recommendation 2, below). Regardless, the Sheriff’s Office needs to specify how it plans to address its commitment to track off-duty hours in real time.

WHAT REMAINS: Include all off-duty work hours in the scheduling system.

## Recommendation 2

OPEN



**The King County Sheriff’s Office should incorporate total hours worked, including off-duty hours, into the overtime assignment criteria.**

STATUS UPDATE: As explained during the last audit follow-up (December 2021), completing this recommendation also depends on Recommendations 1 and 3. Together, the three recommendations directly address the increasing risk when officers work too many hours. Recommendation 3, completed during the last follow-up, set a cap on the amount of hours officers can work. Recommendations 1 and 2 ensure that off-duty work hours are tracked and considered when assigning overtime so that officers do not work too many hours when considering off-duty work. At that time, Sheriff’s Office staff noted that implementation of biweekly pay should allow for progress in completing Recommendations 1 and 2, but then made no progress in 2022. Although the Sheriff’s Office requires officers to report off-duty hours into the secondary employment database, that database is not linked with ATLAS. This means that the calculations ATLAS performs to identify who to prioritize for overtime shifts are inaccurate, as they do not include off-duty hours. Given the ongoing lack of any progress, this recommendation is reverting from “progress” to “open.” The Sheriff’s Office needs to develop a plan to address assignment of overtime shifts that considers all hours worked, including off-duty hours, whether through modifications to ATLAS or other means.

WHAT REMAINS: Include all overtime and off-duty work in procedures for determining overtime assignments.

## Recommendation 3

On December 1, 2021

DONE



## Recommendation 4

DONE



**The King County Sheriff’s Office should reduce how often unincorporated patrol schedules rotate to create more days with overlapping squads on duty.**

STATUS UPDATE: In 2021, the Sheriff’s Office successfully completed a pilot implementing 4/10 scheduling in Precinct 4. Through 2022, it transitioned all unincorporated precincts to 4/10 scheduling. Doing so means all standard patrol schedules for contract partners and unincorporated King County follow the 4/10 model. Although the Sheriff’s Office high vacancy rate makes directly determining the impacts on overtime difficult (as overtime increases during low staffing levels), Sheriff’s Office leaders noted that all patrol deputies now overlap at least two times a month, sometimes three.

IMPACT: Moving to common 4/10 scheduling provides several benefits relative to overtime. Overlapping schedules provide flexibility in planning for training and other ancillary tasks because they do not require overtime to backfill. By using a common approach across contract partners and unincorporated patrol, the Sheriff’s Office also expands the utility of overlapping

schedules across jurisdictions. Although current staffing levels may limit the potential opportunities for reducing overtime based on the ratio of available officers to open shifts, the change enables greater efficiency in managing overtime in the future.

## Recommendation 5

On April 1, 2019

DONE



## Recommendation 6

OPEN



**The King County Sheriff's Office should document and integrate into its staffing system how it determines patrol minimums for unincorporated King County and how it calculates the relief factor it uses to set staffing targets.**

STATUS UPDATE: This recommendation and Recommendation 7, below, speak to two basic needs in any staffing model: the number of shifts that need to be staffed, and the number of staff needed to fill them. As explained in the audit (June 2017), the Sheriff's Office does not clearly identify how it determines the number of patrol shifts that need to be filled, or the number of deputies needed to fill them. Anecdotally, Sheriff's Office staff understand that there are patrol minimums that are based on the terms of its agreements with contract partners and the geographic areas served by unincorporated precincts. However, aside from the specific data points in the ATLAS system, these minimums are not documented for unincorporated patrol. Since the time of the audit, the Sheriff's Office has contracted with consultants to perform analyses of computer-aided dispatch (CAD) calls to identify options for setting staffing based on workload, but did reach the intended results due to CAD data limitations. They have also explained that staffing levels are now so low that they have trouble meeting minimum staffing.

Although the data limitations and staffing challenges noted by the Sheriff's Office are real, they are not fundamental barriers to completing this recommendation and Recommendation 7. The purpose of both recommendations, as explained in the audit (June 2017), is to establish the necessary parameters for its staffing model. This recommendation can be completed by documenting what the current minimums are and what the assumed relief factor(s) are, and why. As explained in the last follow-up (December 2021), "by expressly identifying patrol minimums, [Sheriff's Office] managers can then test assumptions around those minimums, including the relief factor necessary to ensure those minimums are staffed. Doing so would help enable [the Sheriff's Office] to clearly explain its actual patrol resource needs to decision-makers." Notably, documenting what the minimums are does not mean that they are the "best" minimums. Instead, doing so provides the point for future comparison based on other means—calls for service, response times, and the like—while simultaneously allowing the current assumptions on staffing to be tested against actual conditions. Doing so also does not depend on sufficient staffing; rather, it can help demonstrate staffing challenges, in that the Sheriff's Office can show the difficulty in meeting patrol minimums with the current (insufficient) staffing level.

Previously, this recommendation (and Recommendation 7, following) advanced to "progress" based on the consultant work noted above. However, based on the lack of any additional progress since 2020, we are reverting the status of this recommendation, and Recommendation 7, from "progress" to "open."

WHAT REMAINS: As stated in the last audit follow-up (December 2021), to complete this recommendation, the Sheriff's Office should identify the basis for staffing minimums and the relief factor it calculates in determining the number of staff needed. Doing so would help enable the Sheriff's Office in clearly explaining its patrol resource needs to decision-makers.

## Recommendation 7

OPEN



**The King County Sheriff's Office should create a staffing model for unincorporated patrol that accurately reflects both current and future staffing needs, the actual number of deputies that can be deployed to meet patrol minimums, and opportunities to reduce backfill overtime through strategic scheduling.**

STATUS UPDATE: As explained above and in the last audit follow-up (December 2021), the Sheriff's Office planned to use consultant work to develop a staffing model but has made no progress since that effort failed. In 2018, the Sheriff's Office engaged a consultant to assess staffing based on level of work, including unincorporated patrol units. However, limitations in the Office's CAD system prevented the level of detail intended from the work. The Sheriff's Office is now exploring options for CAD system improvements.

During this audit follow-up, Sheriff's Office leaders reiterated their ongoing staffing challenges, specifically explaining they are at roughly 80 percent of their authorized strength when vacancies and non-deployable full-time equivalents (FTEs) are considered. They provided they "may be able to consider this recommendation when vacancy rates are near zero." This comment demonstrates misunderstanding regarding staffing models, in that developing the model should not depend on the actual level of present staffing. As explained above, if the model accurately reflects the number of shifts that need to be staffed, and the number of staff needed to fill them, identifying the actual number of deployable FTEs available to meet those needs can demonstrate the gaps presented by insufficient staffing—and, in turn, provide context regarding prioritization of limited patrol resources. Based on the lack of any additional progress since 2020, we are reverting the status of this recommendation from "progress" to "open."

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, the Sheriff's Office should create a staffing model clearly identifying actual patrol needs based on documented patrol staffing minimums, the number of deployable patrol deputies available (versus vacancies and non-deployable FTEs), and include overtime needed both for supplemental staffing and ancillary duties such as training. The staffing model should allow for comparing the current staffing structure with future approaches based on other criteria (calls for service, response times) and evaluating the accuracy of the relief factor.

## Recommendation 8

On April 1, 2019

CLOSED



## Recommendation 9

DONE



### **The County Executive should eliminate the enriched rate.**

STATUS UPDATE: King County stopped paying the enriched rate to most Sheriff's Office employees in January 2018 as part of its transition to Multiple Components of Pay (MCOP). While a small number of employees continued to receive the rate for the next year and a half, King County has not paid the enriched rate to any Sheriff's Office employees since August 2019.

IMPACT: By removing this duplicative payment, the County is better able to pay employees amounts that are actually owed under collective bargaining agreements as well as federal and state laws. See the follow-up to our technical addendum for more recommendations related to making overtime payments in the absence of the enriched rate.

## Recommendation 10

On April 1, 2019

DONE



## Recommendation 11

On April 1, 2019

DONE



## Recommendation 12

On April 1, 2019

DONE



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Justin Anderson 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.