



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

APRIL 1, 2022

Follow-up on ICE Access to County Data Shows Privacy Program Gaps

King County Information Technology (KCIT) has continued to make very positive progress toward establishing a countywide information privacy program, which will significantly increase the strength of King County's privacy practices as they move from planning to implementation. The department retained a privacy program consultant to help develop the program and provide input on related initiatives, such as establishing performance measures to ensure county agencies purge sensitive data as required. KCIT expects to build on the consultant's work to launch the privacy program in early 2023.

KCIT is building a healthy data governance system for King County, but work remains on elements such as inventorying the County's sensitive data. One key element in data governance is an accurate inventory of what personally identifiable information (PII) the County holds. KCIT has made progress on instituting a common definition of PII and developed plans to help agencies inventory their data and identify any that require additional safeguards. However, until this effort is complete, personal information held by county agencies remains at risk. The County cannot effectively protect information it does not know exists.

Of the 14 audit recommendations:

	8 DONE		6 PROGRESS		0 OPEN
Fully implemented Auditor will no longer monitor.		Partially implemented Auditor will continue to monitor.		Remain unresolved Auditor will continue to monitor.	

Please see details below for implementation status of each recommendation.

Recommendation 1	On November 26, 2019	DONE	
Recommendation 2	On November 26, 2019	DONE	
Recommendation 3	On November 26, 2019	DONE	
Recommendation 4	On April 1, 2021	DONE	
Recommendation 5	On November 26, 2019	DONE	
Recommendation 6	On April 1, 2021	DONE	
Recommendation 7	On April 1, 2021	DONE	
Recommendation 8		PROGRESS	

The Department of Information Technology should develop, document, and execute a countywide privacy program to implement county policy that clarifies roles and responsibilities and resource needs.

STATUS UPDATE: In October 2021, KCIT hired a consultant, BDO, to review King County’s privacy maturity level and provide recommendations related to the development of the privacy program. BDO’s guidance will help KCIT design the privacy program, increase privacy protections, and develop a community engagement strategy for privacy awareness across the County. KCIT anticipates that BDO will begin work in mid-April and deliver the countywide privacy maturity assessment, privacy program implementation plan, and communication plan by early 2023. KCIT hopes to launch an updated privacy program soon after receiving the deliverables.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, KCIT needs to finalize documentation of the privacy program and begin implementation. Full implementation requires involvement and collaboration from all branches of King County government, including those managed by separately elected officials.

Recommendation 9	On April 1, 2021	DONE	
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Recommendation 10

PROGRESS



To comply with county policy, the Department of Information Technology should collaborate with the Public Records Committee and Executive Senior Leadership Team to establish and monitor performance measures to ensure that county agencies purge sensitive personal information in line with relevant records retention schedules.

STATUS UPDATE: KCIT collaborated with the Privacy Working Group and the Public Records Committee to develop draft guidance and performance measures related to privacy and PII. KCIT plans to share this work with the Executive Senior Leadership Team, as well as its privacy program consultant, BDO, to gather input and feedback on the draft measures. KCIT expects that the new privacy program (slated to roll out in early 2023) will include a requirement for executive departments to report on these measures annually.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, KCIT and the Public Records Committee need to finish developing performance measures ensuring that county agencies purge sensitive personal information in-line with county policy. They need to work with the Executive Senior Leadership Team to finalize the measures and develop and implement a monitoring process.

Recommendation 11

PROGRESS



The Department of Information Technology should develop, document, and implement a plan to ensure that all county information systems are capable of purging data in accordance with county policy and best practice.

STATUS UPDATE: KCIT is collaborating with the King County records management program to develop a countywide technical standard for purging data. As of February 2022, the standard was in draft form. It calls for all new King County technology acquired or built to include mechanisms to purge data in accordance with county policy and best practice.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, KCIT needs to finalize its standard pertaining to new IT systems. In addition, it should develop, document, and implement a plan to ensure that existing systems can also purge data in accordance with county policy and best practice.

Recommendation 12

PROGRESS



The Department of Information Technology should work with the County Council and other stakeholders to establish, communicate, and use a common definition of personally identifiable information.

STATUS UPDATE: KCIT drafted a new definition of PII. It also drafted a proposal to remove previous definitions from county code and replace them with direction to the County's privacy policy, which will include the new definition. KCIT plans to have the privacy consultant and the Prosecuting Attorney review the definition and proposal. KCIT will work with the Executive Office on transmittal of the proposed King County Code update to the County Council later this year.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, KCIT needs to finalize the code change and updated privacy policy and communicate the changes to county users.

Recommendation 13

PROGRESS



The Department of Information Technology should develop, document, and execute a plan to build and maintain an accurate and up-to-date inventory of personal information the County collects.

STATUS UPDATE: In January 2022, KCIT released a plan to work with county departments and agencies to conduct a baseline inventory of personal information King County collects. The plan calls for KCIT to validate departmental responses and classify the data in accordance with the County's Asset Management Policy in 2022. KCIT recognizes that maintaining an accurate inventory will require both policy development and training for relevant users.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, KCIT needs to execute its baseline data inventory plan and define mechanisms to ensure its sustainability, such as policy development and user training.

Recommendation 14

PROGRESS



The Department of Information Technology should develop and disseminate tools for agencies to identify personally identifiable information collected in department databases that requires additional safeguards.

STATUS UPDATE: KCIT developed a suite of information security policies that help agencies identify and secure sensitive data in February 2021. KCIT folded the effort to get county agencies to implement the policies into its data inventory initiative (Recommendation 13). It plans to work with agencies on how to complete the initial inventory assessment beginning in 2022.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation and ensure consistent data privacy across King County, KCIT needs to communicate its security policies to county agencies in all branches and train them on how to use the tools provided to identify data requiring additional safeguards.

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 or 206-477-1033.