

# Highlights

## What is Governance?

Governance is the exercise of authority, direction, and control by a governing board. It deals with *what* an organization is to do. Governance is focused on planning, setting goals and objectives, and developing policies to guide an organization and monitor its progress towards implementing its plans.

## Why We Did This Audit

This audit is required under Section 2-722 of the Code of Ordinances. In 2001, the City Auditor's Office developed a governance checklist that could be used by the mayor and City Council to evaluate the performance of city boards and commissions. Current code requires that the city auditor distribute the governance assessment checklist at least once every four years to governing or policy boards of the city and report the results to the City Council by November 1.

## Methodology

We sent assessment checklists to 17 boards and commissions and 13 responded. Our work focused on summarizing the governance practices reported by the boards and commissions.

The list of boards and commissions as well as their individual responses can be found in the audit report.

For more information, contact the City Auditor's Office at 816-513-3300 or [auditor@kcmo.org](mailto:auditor@kcmo.org).

To view the complete report, go to <http://kcmo.gov/cityauditor> and click on Search Audit Reports

## PERFORMANCE AUDIT 2015 Governance Assessment

### City Boards and Commissions Oversee Important Activities

Boards and commissions have major authority and responsibilities within Kansas City government. They are responsible for overseeing important public activities including policing, maintenance of parks, and development incentives. Boards and commissions are responsible for allocating significant public resources. The 17 boards and commissions we surveyed expended more than \$509 million during their 2014 accounting year.

### Conclusions Based on Board and Commission Responses

City board and commission responses to the self-assessment checklist identified strengths and weaknesses in the six core governance functions:

- Leading the organization.
- Setting policies delineating management responsibilities.
- Ensuring management compliance with board directives.
- Ensuring accountability for achieving organizational goals.
- Ensuring a high level of board performance and effectiveness.
- Representing the public.

Most of the boards and commissions report having incorporated good governance practices to lead their organizations, adopting policies defining board and management responsibilities, and holding their organization accountable for achieving goals. Some responses, however, also demonstrate improvements could be made in ensuring oversight of management compliance with board directives, board performance and effectiveness, and representation of the public.

We did not verify board and commission responses to the questions in the assessment checklist.

### How the Checklist and Results Should Be Used

The checklist is a tool that boards and commissions should use to assess their own governance practices and a framework the City Council should use for questioning city boards and commissions on governance practices. Because boards and commissions are not directly accountable to the public for their actions, the City Council should provide oversight of those serving on city governing and policy boards.