

# 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 the city auditor distribute the governance checklist at least once every four years and report the results to the City Council by November 1.

## Methodology

We sent assessment checklists to 15 boards and commissions and 14 responded. Our work focused on summarizing the governance practices reported by the boards and commissions.

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

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

Click [here](#) to view the full report.

To view other audit reports, please visit our website <http://kcmo.gov/cityauditor> and click on Search Our Work.

## PERFORMANCE AUDIT

### 2019 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 15 agencies we surveyed expended more than \$590 million in 2018.

#### Conclusions Based on Board and Commission Responses

City board and commission responses to the self-assessment checklist identified strengths and weaknesses in the following 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 incorporating 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 representing the public.

#### 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.

Because boards and commissions are not directly accountable to the public for their actions, the City Council should provide oversight to city governing and policy boards. The Council can use this audit and the submitted governance checklists as tools or a framework to exercise this oversight by requesting boards or commissions:

- appear before a committee to provide details on how they achieved their high levels of good governance;
- appear before a committee to explain some of their responses to the checklist compared to recommended practices;
- implement a good governance practice; or
- provide a report on the board's or commission's goals for their agency.