

OVERVIEW

Follow-Up Audit of Custodial Services Programs of the Department of Accounting and General Services, the Judiciary, the Department of Education, and the University of Hawaii

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Summary

Custodial services programs provide a valuable service that supports the daily operations of state government. When properly managed, the State's custodial services programs ensure a clean and safe environment for the transaction of government business.

In 1996, we conducted an audit of the custodial services programs for the Department of Accounting and General Services, the Judiciary, the Department of Education, and the University of Hawaii. We found that program managers had failed to establish and use fundamental management controls consistently in the delivery of custodial services. We conducted this follow-up audit to assess the progress made in those programs.

The Department of Accounting and General Services, the Judiciary, the Department of Education, and the University of Hawaii manage most of the State's custodial services programs. The four agencies employ more than 1,600 custodial staff responsible for approximately 24.5 million square feet of space in state facilities. Over \$46 million is expended each year for custodial services.

We found that the State's custodial services programs have not fully utilized fundamental management controls to ensure that facilities are adequately clean and safe. Despite agency efforts to improve custodial services since 1996, areas of weakness still exist. While all four agencies have adopted cleanliness standards as recommended in our 1996 audit, the standards have not been communicated to line staff. As a result, an inordinate range of cleanliness can exist from facility to facility. In response to our satisfaction survey, tenants commented on the need for adherence to task lists ("The carpets have noticeable stains that I've asked several times to have them cleaned. . . . I see dead bugs remain in the same spot on the floor for weeks." "I've seen the janitor vacuum only once out of the ten months I have been here.").

In addition, although most of the agencies have developed appropriate forms as recommended by the 1996 audit, inspections and use of checklists are sporadic and inconsistent. Responding to our survey, building tenants pointed out the need for more consistent and systematic oversight ("The custodial supervisor needs to stay on top of the custodians, monitoring and assisting them." "They need to be told and monitored to perform their tasks. A lot of things are not being done at all.").



In our 1996 audit, we found that program managers failed to use cost data to assess the cost effectiveness of resources used in their programs and to compare alternative service delivery methods. In this audit, we found that each of the agencies conducted some evaluations involving cost data, although not always on a systematic basis. Accordingly, program evaluation, decision-making, and budget development may have been adversely impacted by the inconsistent use of cost data analysis.

Another effective way to evaluate and determine areas for improvement in custodial services programs is to conduct a satisfaction survey of building users. Our own surveys revealed overall satisfaction among tenants had increased over time—from 55 percent in 1996 to 63 percent in 2004. On the other hand, the comments we received continue to highlight areas needing improvement, such as consistent completion of cleaning tasks and better supervision of custodial performance.

We also found that, although the departments conduct various training classes, custodial services programs still lack certain elements of a formal training program. Except for the University of Hawaii, the agencies rely heavily on on-the-job training for custodial staff. In addition, by forgoing membership in relevant trade organizations, certain program managers miss opportunities to obtain current information on industry standards, management tools, training programs, and effective data analysis techniques.

Recommendations and Response

We recommended that the Department of Accounting and General Services, the Judiciary, the Department of Education, and the University of Hawaii should use management tools and best management practices to improve their custodial services programs. Specifically, each agency's program manager should implement guidelines for cleanliness standards to inform line staff of the level of cleanliness they must achieve and how their work will be evaluated; require the systematic use of checklist forms by line staff; require regular and documented inspections, including follow-up actions by supervisory staff; and evaluate their custodial services programs by assessing cost effectiveness of resource use, comparing alternative service delivery methods, and evaluating user satisfaction. We also recommended that the agencies develop formal training programs to identify, develop, and build the knowledge, skills, and abilities custodians need to perform their jobs safely and competently.

The Department of Accounting and General Services, the Department of Education, the Judiciary, and the University of Hawaii generally accepted our findings and agreed that improvements, as recommended, are in order.

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