



# Washington State Auditor's Office

Independence • Respect • Integrity

## Performance Audit

2015 Highlights and Public Records Study

**Financial Management Advisory Council**  
**February 25, 2016**

Sohara Monaghan, Senior Performance Auditor  
Tania Fleming, Performance Auditor

# Performance Auditing

- **Performance audits**

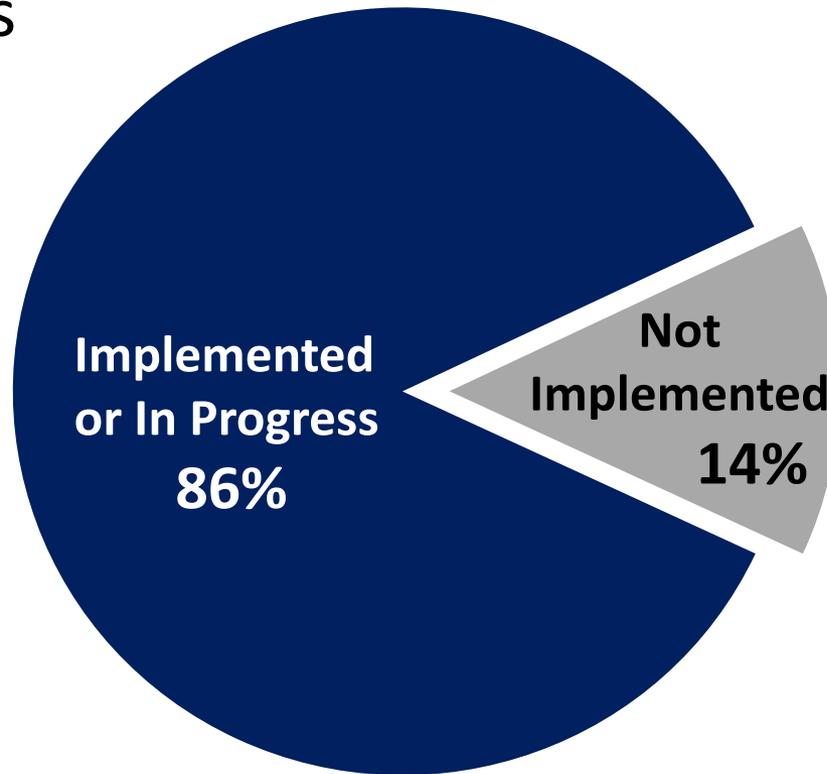
- Examine efficiency, effectiveness, or economy of government programs
- Identify root causes of issues
- Provide meaningful recommendations to address issues

- **Audit topic selection**

- State Auditor's Office can choose what to audit
- Legislature can request an audit

# Implementation of recommendations

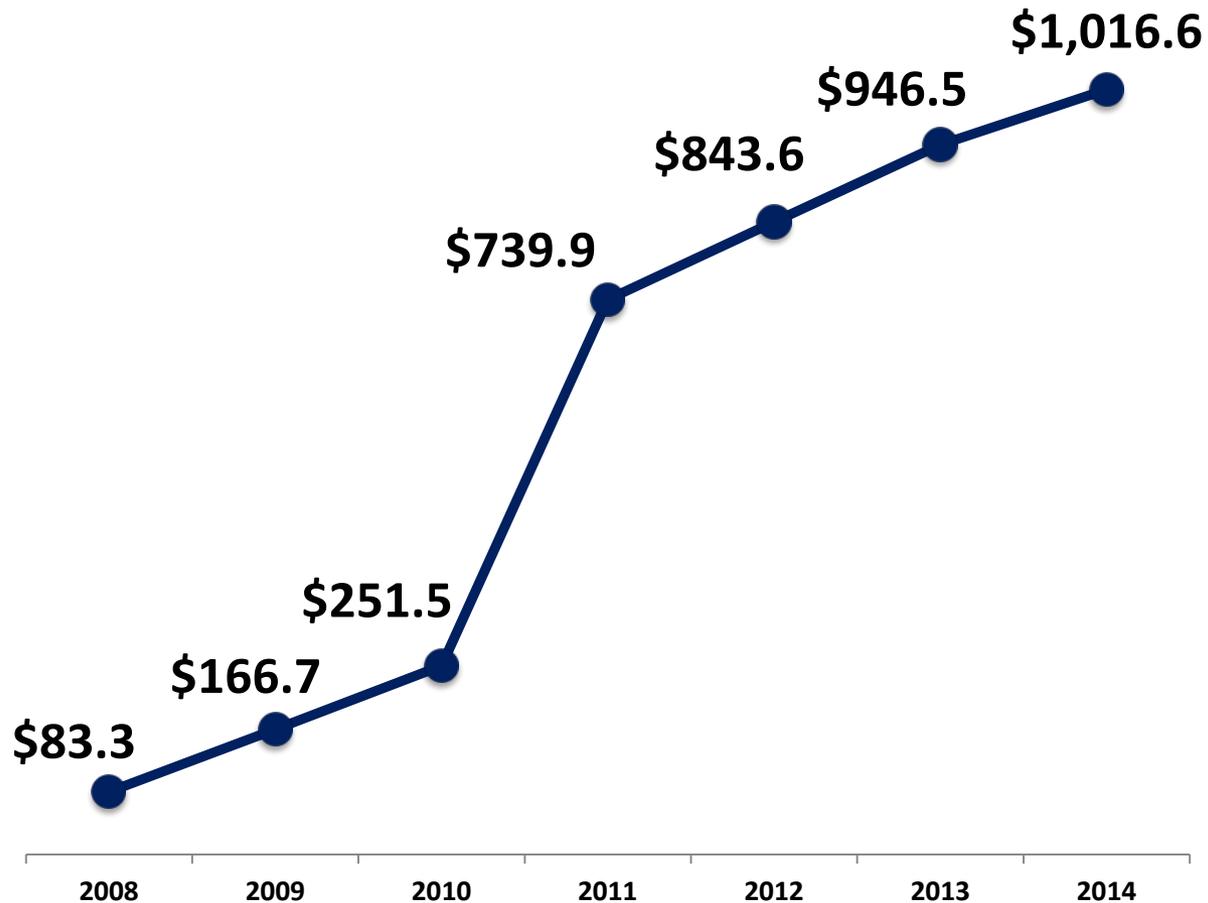
Since 2007, **86 percent** of recommendations adopted or in progress



*Self-reported by agencies; we do not independently verify recommendation status or cost savings*

# Cumulative cost savings

Since 2007, agencies have reported an average \$187 million in annual cost savings or new revenue, totaling more than **\$1 billion**

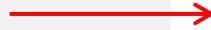


# Performance audits continue to effect change

## Audits

## Results

### ■ Regulatory Reform



**SSB 5679, SSB 5718, HB 1818, ESHB 1403 required:**

- Implementation of one-stop business portal
- Business rule review process
- Streamlining regulations
- Participation in business licensing system

### ■ Protecting Children from Sex Offenders



**Agencies involved acted swiftly:**

- Investigate cases, remove children, fire employees, and/or revoke licenses
- OSPI and State Patrol now conduct regular reviews of employees for new convictions

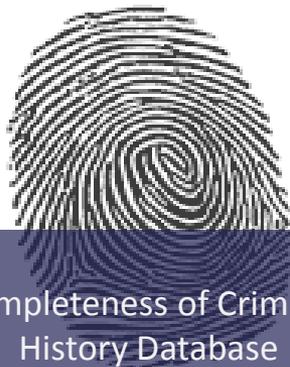
### ■ Developmental Disabilities Program Evaluation



**HB 6387:**

- Expanded assistance to 4,000 families for respite care services
- Allowed another 1,000 families to receive full community-based services

# Audit Highlights of 2015



Completeness of Criminal History Database



Prioritizing Fraud Investigations



Enhancing Regulatory Agency Coordination



Identifying Overlap and Duplication in Workforce



Processing Provider Practice Complaints



Alternative Learning Experience

# Performance Audits in Progress-2016

- **Public Records Requests Study**
- Washington State Patrol Radio
- Prison Staff Safety
- Administrative Appeals Process
- WSDOT's Toll Collection System
- Medical Quality Assurance Commission
- Alternative Learning Education Program
- Health Benefit Exchange
- Workforce Development
- Compliance with Initiative 1163
- Barriers to Completion of I-1163 Requirements
- Department of Correctional Industries Program
- Follow-up Report on Print Services
- State and Local Government Information Technology Audits

# Public Records Request Study

## Commonly Reported Challenges

- The Public Records Act has not evolved to account for the costs and workload resulting from:
  - Increase in the volume and complexity of records requests public agencies receive today
  - Increase in the volume of records created and requested in electronic format

## SAO's Public Records Study Intent

- Provide stakeholders with a clearer picture on public records requests and the impact to public agencies across Washington
- Inform policy deliberations about the Public Records Act

# Study Questions



What costs do state and local governments incur when responding to paper and electronic public records requests?



What leading practices could governments use to effectively manage public records, respond to requests, and make public information more accessible?



What cost recovery methods do other states use for providing public records?

# What we are doing to address Question 1

**Survey all state and local public agencies in Washington to collect relevant public records request information, including:**

- Costs entities incur in responding to public records requests
  - Costs of litigation resulting from lawsuits and legal settlements
- Costs the PRA allows entities to recover
    - ✓ Paper copies, DVDs, CDs
    - ✓ Scanning fees
    - ✓ Postage and delivery
  - Costs the PRA does not allow entities to recover
    - ✓ Staff
    - ✓ Supplies
    - ✓ External services
    - ✓ Capital or one-time expenditures

# What we are doing to address Question 1

**Survey all state and local public entities in Washington to collect relevant public records request information, including:**

- Nature of public records request entities receive
- Number of public records requests entities receive and number of requests abandoned
- Practices entities use for managing public records and responding to records requests
- Changes/trends in public records requests

## *Nature of requests:*

- ✓ Types of requests
- ✓ Time to fulfill requests
- ✓ Requesters of records
- ✓ Complexity of requests

# Potential Analysis of Survey Data

(contingent on data availability)

## Who?

- Are all public entities impacted by public records requests?
- Which government types are most impacted?

## How Much?

- How much are PRA requests costing government entities?
- How does costs incurred compare to costs recovered?
- Are entities budgeting for public records requests?

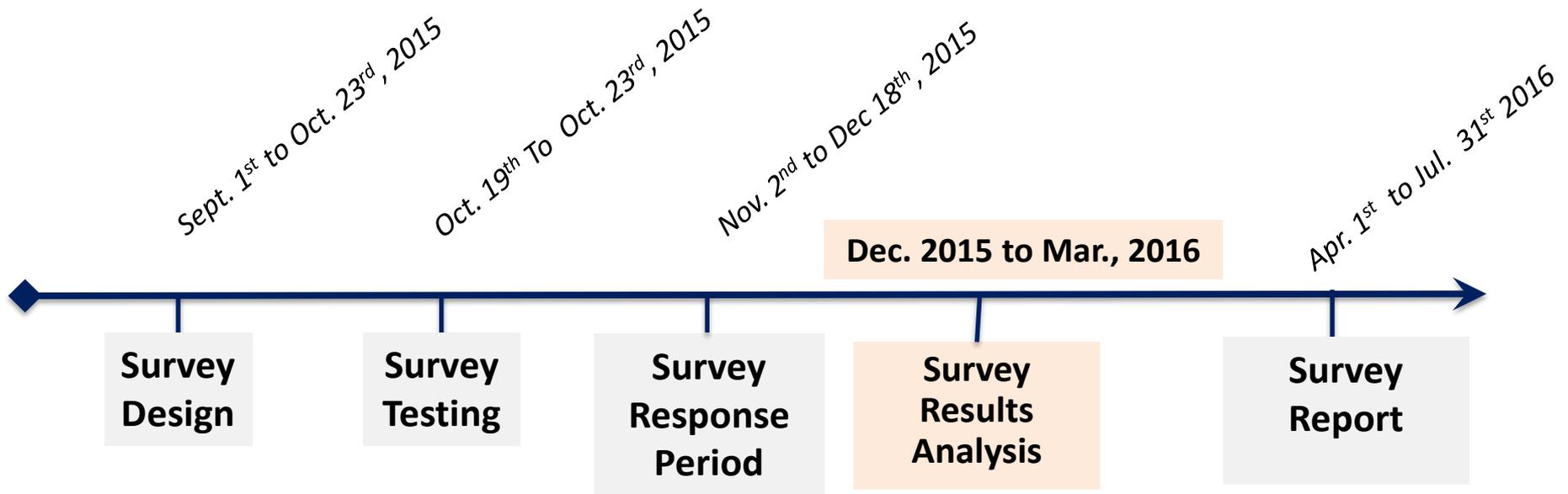
## Changes /Trends

- Are costs incurred in responding to PRA requests increasing?
- Are the number of PRA requests entities receive increasing?
- Is the percentage of PRA requests fulfilled electronically increasing?

## Patterns /Themes

- Who are the most common requesters of records?
- What is the typical amount of time taken to fulfill requests?
- What are some common practices entities use to manage public records requests?

# Survey Timeline



# Communication with Government Entities

- Outreach with local government associations
- Contact Verification Request
- Survey notices and survey deadline extensions
- WAPRO conference presentation
- Webinar
- Public Records Study webpage ([SAO's Public Records Study Website](#))

# Identifying Leading Practices and Cost Recovery Methods

## Identify practices and methods in other states.

- **Similarities in Politics:** Oregon, Minnesota
- **Recent Changes in Public Records Laws:** Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Florida, Illinois
- **Reputation for Open Government:** Utah, Pennsylvania, Vermont



# Identifying Leading Practices and Cost Recovery Methods

Identify practices and methods in Washington through focus groups.



# Next Steps

- Continue fieldwork
- Analyze survey information, research, and interviews
- Publish Report
- Present report results (JLARC, Local Government House Committee)

# Contacts

**Sohara Monaghan, MBA**  
Senior Performance Auditor  
(360) 725-5616  
[Sohara.Monaghan@sao.wa.gov](mailto:Sohara.Monaghan@sao.wa.gov)

**Tania Fleming, MPA**  
Performance Auditor  
(360) 725-5627  
[Tania.Fleming@sao.wa.gov](mailto:Tania.Fleming@sao.wa.gov)

Website: [www.sao.wa.gov](http://www.sao.wa.gov)