

Priority: Accountability

Lead Agency: Auditor

Program Offer Type: New Program

Program Contact: LaVonne Griffin-Valade

Related Programs:

Program Characteristics:

Executive Summary

The Public Accountability -- Ombudsman Program will support the Auditor's mission of ensuring that County government is honest, efficient, effective, equitable, and fully accountable by providing citizens with an independent and impartial process for addressing concerns about County services. The Auditor follows government auditing standards requiring independence and objectivity, and to carry out its work most effectively, the ombudsman program will meet comparable standards.

The Auditor's Office regularly receives calls from citizens about concerns with County services and has at times been forwarded information from the State's Fraud Hotline and has handled these situations on an ad hoc basis. This Program will assist citizens with understanding County rules and will help to resolve concerns with County programs and officials. For those cases that are more complex and consequential, the Program will investigate and issue a report that provides County officials, management, and employees with timely information and practical recommendations for improving service to the public.

Program Description

The Public Accountability -- Ombudsman Program will assist the public and County government in four ways: 1) help concerned individuals to understand County procedures and identify department contacts; 2) facilitate discussion with departments and officials when conflicts remain unresolved; 3) investigate more serious complaints about County operations and services; and 4) follow-up with departments to ensure that recommendations have been implemented. The goal of the Program will be to safeguard the rights of citizens and to promote equity, efficiency, and justice in County government.

The Public Accountability -- Ombudsman Program will also provide the Auditor's Office with an additional source of information to identify potential audit areas. The first year of the Program will require that someone be hired with previous experience who will know how to implement an ombudsman program. The salary for the Program Director is intended to be competitive enough to attract such a person.

Program Justification

Standards developed by the United States Ombudsman Association indicate that the essential characteristics of an ombudsman program are independence and impartiality. As a function of the Auditor's Office, the Public Accountability -- Ombudsman Program will have the authority to conduct independent and impartial investigations of complaints. The Program will help to achieve the goal of making County government accountable at every level and continuous program improvement. The Program will be a tool for accountability by improving the responsiveness of decision-makers and by making the County's procedures and processes more accessible and transparent. The Public Accountability -- Ombudsman Program will also serve to increase citizens' trust of government.

Performance Measures

Measure Type	Primary Measure	Previous Year Actual (FY04-05)	Current Year Purchased (FY05-06)	Current Year Estimate (FY05-06)	Next Year Offer (FY06-07)
Output	Number of complaints and requests received	0	0	0	300
Outcome	Percent of cases resolved within 30 days	0%	0%	0%	50%
Outcome	% of individuals reporting satisfaction with service received	0%	0%	0%	80%
Output	Number of outreach meetings to the public	0	0	0	35

Performance Measure - Description

As public awareness of the Public Accountability -- Ombudsman Program increases, and as County departments and the City/County Information and Referral staff come to rely on services provided by the Ombudsman Program, the number of complaints and requests will increase. Resolving cases within 30 days will be an important goal that helps improve program effectiveness. A survey of those receiving services from the program will help determine satisfaction with services and lead to program improvements. Outreach to the public will lead to increased awareness of the Ombudsman Program and the services available to citizens.

Legal/Contractual Obligation

County Charter 8.10 includes the statement that the auditor may also conduct studies intended to measure or improve the performance of county efforts. The Charter requires the Auditor's Office to follow government auditing standards. As part of those standards, the Auditor's Office has a peer review every 3 years. These reviews ensure that non-audit services, such as the Public Accountability -- Ombudsman Program, do not represent an impairment to the Auditor's independence. In addition, the Public Accountability -- Ombudsman Program will follow the governmental ombudsman standards established by the United States Ombudsman Association in 2003.

Revenue/Expense Detail

	Proposed General Fund	Proposed Other Funds	Proposed General Fund	Proposed Other Funds
Program Expenses	2006	2006	2007	2007
Personnel	\$0	\$0	\$123,553	\$0
Materials & Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$0
Internal Services	\$0	\$0	\$2,863	\$0
Subtotal: Direct Exps:	\$0	\$0	\$127,416	\$0
Administration	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Program Support	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Subtotal: Other Exps:	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total GF/non-GF:	\$0	\$0	\$127,416	\$0
Program Total:	\$0		\$127,416	
Program FTE	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00
Program Revenues				
Program Revenue for Admin	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Revenue:	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Explanation of Revenues

General Fund supported program.

Significant Program Changes

Last year this program was:

New program-no significant changes.