

Texas Department of Public Safety
Chief Auditor's Office

Fiscal Year 2026 Internal Audit Strategy



This Internal Audit Strategy was prepared by the Chief Auditor to be presented to the Commissioners of the Texas Department of Public Safety for approval on October 9, 2025.

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

5805 N LAMAR BLVD • BOX 4087 • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78773-0001

512-424-2000

www.dps.texas.gov



FREEMAN F. MARTIN
COLONEL
WALT GOODSON
JASON C. TAYLOR
LIEUTENANT COLONELS



STEVEN P. MACH, CHAIRMAN
NELDA L. BLAIR
DAN HORD III
LARRY B. LONG
STEVEN H. STODGHILL

October 9, 2025

Commissioners of the Texas Department of Public Safety

The work performed by the Chief Auditor's Office is a key element in assuring accountability, economy, efficiency, and effectiveness within the Texas Department of Public Safety operations. Our office is committed to being a trusted, independent, and objective resource that provides quality internal auditing services. We will aggressively pursue projects in fiscal year 2026 to continue assisting the Department in improving controls, reducing risk, and enhancing Department operations.

As discussed under "Acceptable Level of Risk," our strategy does not, nor is it intended to, address or provide comprehensive coverage of all Department components or systems. Rather, it is structured to ensure the Chief Auditor's resources are allocated prudently and effectively to support the Department in addressing its critical priorities and mitigating key risks.

We wish to thank Department management and staff for their valuable assistance in providing information and input that led to the development of this proposal. The Chief Auditor's Office looks forward to continuing to help the Department meet its objectives. For further information on the Fiscal Year 2026 Internal Audit Strategy, please don't hesitate to contact me at (512) 424-7573 or by email at catherine.melvin@dps.texas.gov.

Respectfully Submitted,

DocuSigned by:

A blue ink signature of Catherine A. Melvin, written in a cursive style.

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Catherine A. Melvin, CPA, CIA, CISA
Chief Auditor

cc: Freeman Martin, Colonel
Jason Taylor, Lt. Colonel, Public Safety Operations
Walt Goodson, Lt. Colonel, Public Safety Services

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Introduction

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our vision of Internal Audit efforts for the Texas Department of Public Safety for the 2026 fiscal year. Accordingly, our strategy covers September 1, 2025, through August 31, 2026. This document provides our **audit plan** as required by professional auditing standards and *Texas Government Code §2102.008*.

The Chief Auditor's Office is committed to being a valuable resource and trusted adviser in improving the Department's operations. We are proposing a strategy that focuses on critical risk areas yet provides flexibility to allow for the Commissioners' and management's special requests as they may arise throughout the year. Our strategy allows for flexibility to respond when such services are needed.

Purpose of Internal Auditing

The Chief Auditor's Office Charter, approved by the Public Safety Commission in February 2025, provides the purpose, authority, and framework for the internal auditing function of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

As the internal audit profession has evolved, so has the definition of our work efforts.

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and advisory service designed to add value and improve an organization's operations. It helps an organization accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of governance, risk management, and control processes.¹

Types of Internal Audit Services

Internal Audit services consist of two types of engagements – assurance and advisory. In fiscal year 2026, the Chief Auditor's Office will continue to provide both types of services.

Assurance Engagements

The Chief Auditor's Office provides assurance services for the agency which are defined as objective examinations of evidence for the purpose of providing an independent assessment on risk management, control, and governance processes for the organization.

Assurance engagements by the Chief Auditor's Office are often in the form of a performance audit. A performance audit is a dynamic process that includes consideration of applicable standards throughout the course of the audit. Performance

¹ Institute of Internal Auditors

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audit objectives may vary widely and include assessments of program effectiveness, economy and efficiency, internal controls, compliance with laws and regulations, and prospective analysis.

Advisory Engagements

By definition, internal auditing also includes the provision of advisory services. Advisory services are services through which internal auditors provide advice to their organization's stakeholders without providing assurance or taking on management responsibilities. The nature and scope of advisory services are subject to agreement with relevant stakeholders. Examples include advising on the design and implementation of new policies, processes, systems, and products; providing forensic services; providing training; and facilitating discussions about risks and controls.

Progressive internal audit departments provide their organizations with additional management assistance or advisory services. We will continue to provide formal and informal counsel and recommendations on management issues, concerns, and proposed plans.

By providing advisory activities, the Chief Auditor's Office adds value to the Department beyond assurance services. These activities are an important component of strengthening the Department's internal control framework.

Strategy Development

The Chief Auditor's Office develops the proposed Internal Audit Strategy by first assessing the risk environment facing the Department.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a systematic process for assessing and integrating professional judgments about probable adverse conditions and/or events. Critical functional areas with higher risk are prioritized for the Chief Auditor's Office's attention. The risk assessment process provides a means of organizing and integrating professional judgment, research, and management and Commissioner input for the development of our work priorities. The risk assessment process leads the Chief Auditor to establish priorities, which become the Internal Audit Strategy.

Strategy Development

Ultimately, the Internal Audit Strategy is derived based on the risk assessment results, which incorporates management and Commissioner input, auditor judgment, and relative risk. From this assessment emerges the proposed strategic direction for CAO efforts.

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Agency Core Values

The core values supporting the Department's mission statement are Integrity, Excellence, Accountability, and Teamwork. The Chief Auditor's Office plays an important role in supporting the Department's efforts toward meeting its goals and objectives. We consider the Department's core values in each project and engagement undertaken and ensure the alignment of our efforts.

Acceptable Level of Risk

While the proposed Internal Audit Strategy results from our consideration of a wide-ranging scope of projects, it does not, nor does it intend to, address or provide coverage for all Department programs, activities, systems, or responsibilities. Our goal is to optimize our limited resources to provide reasonable coverage in the areas we believe would most benefit from our services and address key risks.

However, because we cannot address every risk area, it is important for the Commission and management to understand the limitations of the audit coverage and the risks they assume in areas not audited. We believe that this plan appropriately and best allocates resources of the Chief Auditor's Office to the critical priorities and risks of the Department at this point in time.

Performance Objectives

The CAO performance objectives for FY2026 are as follows:

Measure	Target
1. Completion of the approved FY26 CAO Internal Audit Strategy	All approved areas covered
2. Result of External Quality Assessment	Conforms to requirements
3. Percentage of CAO professional staff meeting required continuing professional education hours for Calendar Year 2025	100%
4. Results of Internal Quality Assessment	Conforms to requirements
5. Result of Quality Management Risk Assessment	<u>No</u> significant quality risks identified
6. Percentage of CAO professional staff carrying at least one active relevant professional certification	80%

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Resourcing

The proposed Internal Audit Strategy is dependent on the FY26 operating budget allocated to the Chief Auditor's Office as approved by the Public Safety Commission. The FY26 Internal Operating Budget for the Chief Auditor's Office funds 19.0 FTEs in FY26 to carry out the responsibilities as approved and directed by the Public Safety Commission. While the proposed Internal Audit Strategy is flexible to allow for limited staff turnover during the year, ensuring the availability of qualified and trained internal audit professionals is necessary to complete the proposed strategy.

Professional Standards

We adhere to *Government Auditing Standards*, as promulgated by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, and the *Global Internal Audit Standards*, as promulgated by the Institute of Internal Auditors. In addition, we conform to requirements found under the *Texas Internal Auditing Act* (Texas Govt Code §2102) and comply with the policies and procedures of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

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Fiscal Year 2026

Internal Audit Strategy

For the Period September 2025 – August 2026

I. Internal Audit Assurance and Advisory Efforts

Risk-Based Strategic Focus Areas

- Financial Controls and Processes
- Licensing and Regulatory Services
- Personnel Management
- Emerging Risks (*Rapid Response Projects, as requested/needed*)

Standing Internal Audit Efforts

- Completion of FY25 Projects in Progress
- Information Resources and Cybersecurity
- Contract Monitoring and Compliance
- Field Administration Review
- Follow-Up Program
- Efficiency and Effectiveness of Business Processes

II. Coordination of External Audits/Reviews

- Statewide Single Audit – State Auditor's Office with Clifton Larson Allen
- Other External Audits/Reviews – State Auditor's Office, Comptroller's Office, etc.

III. Administration of the Internal Audit Function

- Quality Assurance and Improvement Program
- Continuing Professional Education
- Development of the Fiscal Year 2027 Internal Audit Strategy
- Strategic Planning and Administrative Initiatives
- Service to the Profession

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Internal Audit Assurance and Advisory Efforts

Risk-Based Strategic Focus Areas

The CAO is proposing the following strategic focus areas for FY26 assurance and advisory efforts based on our assessment of risk.

- **Financial Controls and Processes:** The financial controls and processes represent the backbone of an organization. The CAO considers the related financial controls and processes in most engagements it undertakes. Without adequate and effective financial controls and processes in place, an organization is challenged in successfully achieving its goals and objectives.
- **Licensing and Regulatory Services:** The Department holds certain licensing and regulatory responsibilities for the state. These include driver licensing, handgun licensing, private security, compassionate use program, vehicle inspection, capitol access pass, ignition interlock device, metal recycling entities, precursor chemical and laboratory apparatus. As licensing and regulatory services can represent a critical and high-risk area for the Department, the CAO will consider both assurance and advisory efforts in this area.
- **Personnel Management:** The Department's greatest asset is its people. The CAO will consider both assurance and advisory efforts in this area to include recruiting, hiring, compensating, evaluating, managing, staffing, terminating, etc. This arena can also include training and education, investigations, EEO and ADA compliance, and dispute resolution services.
- **Emerging Risks:** Internal audit plans must allow for flexibility to address any unanticipated risks that may emerge throughout the year. As in the past, the CAO prides itself in its agility and ability to focus resources to rapidly respond to any immediate needs of the Commissioners and of Department management that may arise not already contemplated in this plan.

Standing Internal Audit Efforts

Standing Internal Audit efforts are specific engagements or areas of focus the CAO will address every year.

- **Completion of FY25 Projects in Progress:** Each year, some project efforts cross over into the new fiscal year. We devote some time to completing these efforts.
- **Information Technology and Cybersecurity:** Information Technology is vital to the Department's infrastructure. Recognizing the integral and vital role information technology throughout the Department's responsibilities, the CAO will ensure attention is focused on information technology and cybersecurity each year.
- **Contract Compliance and Monitoring:** State contract management and administration practices remain a critical area of interest to state oversight and leadership offices. State agencies are faced with increasingly complex and challenging requirements to ensure maximization of value while providing for fair, open, and transparent processes. The Texas Internal Auditing Act requires internal audit functions to "consider methods for ensuring compliance with contract processes and controls and for monitoring agency contracts."
- **Field Administration Reviews:** The CAO will continue to provide an Internal Audit presence in field administration through a concentrated program examining selected processes of interest at a high level at regional offices.

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- **Follow-Up Program:** Professional auditing standards require the Chief Auditor establish a follow-up process to “monitor and ensure that management actions have been effectively implemented or that senior management has accepted the risk of not taking action.” To that end, the CAO may perform follow-up audits on select completed audits each year based on a risk assessment. These audits are intended to assess the extent, adequacy, and effectiveness of corrective actions taken to improve conditions noted. The CAO may also request management’s assertion as to the status of corrective actions taken – these assertions are subject to audit during a follow-up audit.
- **Efficiency and Effectiveness of Business Processes:** Government entities have a core responsibility to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. The CAO will continue to dedicate resources to both advisory and assurance projects focused on reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of various Department business processes and policies. Business process improvement is complementary to progressive internal auditing. The CAO is committed to being a valuable resource and trusted adviser in improving the Department’s operations. Our commitment to business process improvement enables our office to be responsive to management’s needs proactively and provide more solutions-focused assistance. We will continue to seek ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness of business processes in each engagement we undertake.

Coordination of External Audits/Reviews

The CAO serves as a liaison for all external audits/reviews of the Department. The CAO assists Department management during external audits and reviews and helps to shepherd these engagements through the Department with the goal of fair and accurate outcomes.

- **Statewide Single Audit:** The Statewide Single Audit is a mandatory audit for the State of Texas. The Department’s administration of certain federal funds is typically included in the statewide audit.
- **Other External Audits/Reviews:** The Department is routinely audited by external entities such as the State Auditor’s Office (SAO), the Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA), and any provider of federal grant funds.

Administration of the Internal Audit Function

- **Quality Assurance and Improvement Program:** In accordance with the Texas Internal Auditing Act (Gov’t Code Chapter 2102) and our professional standards, the chief audit executive must develop and maintain a quality assurance and improvement program that covers all aspects of the internal audit function. The quality assurance and improvement program is designed to enable an evaluation of the internal audit function’s conformance with professional standards and an evaluation of whether internal auditors apply the Code of Ethics. The program also assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of the internal audit function and identifies opportunities for improvement.
- **Continuing Professional Education:** Professional standards require each internal auditor to obtain 40 hours of continuing professional education annually. The CAO strives to conserve and maximize its budget while seeking quality continuing professional education to develop and enhance our professional competencies to better serve the Department.
- **Development of the Fiscal Year 2027 Internal Audit Strategy:** The Chief Auditor is required to establish plans to carry out the responsibilities of the internal auditing department. An effective plan allocates internal audit resources to the most critical areas of the agency needing independent review. Integral to this process is the performance of an agency-wide risk assessment. Risk assessment is a systematic process for assessing and integrating professional judgments about probable adverse conditions and/or events.

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The risk assessment process leads the Chief Auditor to establish audit work schedule priorities which become the Internal Audit Strategy and plan for the coming year.

- **Strategic Planning and Administrative Initiatives:** In addition to routine administration necessary to ensure the effectiveness of a high performing internal audit function, the CAO is committed to additional initiatives within the office to groom, develop, and retain superior audit talent. In FY2026, the office will continue to examine its career ladder and other development opportunities to ensure the DPS CAO remains a much sought-after place of employment for exceptional professional audit leaders.
- **Service to the Profession:** As part of the CAO's commitment to stay abreast of developments in its profession and its commitment to develop staff, we will continue to give back to the internal audit community. Potential activities include mentoring, speaking, training, participating in professional organizations, and participating in peer reviews of other internal audit shops. In addition to developing staff, these efforts help enhance the Department's stature in the professional internal audit community and help to attract and retain high caliber professionals.