

Service Alberta—Information Technology Control Framework Follow-up

SUMMARY

In 2008 we recommended that the Ministry of Service Alberta, in conjunction with all ministries and through CIO Council, develop and promote:

- a comprehensive IT control framework and guidance for implementing it
- well-designed and effective IT control processes and activities¹

An IT control framework is a set of policies, processes, standards and controls that help an organization identify risks to its IT strategy and then help eliminate or reduce those risks to an acceptable level.

We assessed Service Alberta's progress to implement this recommendation in 2010 and 2012 and found that, although its progress continued, the department was not ready for a final assessment. In October 2012 Service Alberta reiterated its commitment to finish implementing this recommendation. We conducted our follow-up audit in June and July 2013.

FINDINGS

Information technology control framework—implemented

Service Alberta has implemented this recommendation by working with the CIO Council to create an IT governance and control working group with members and subject matter experts from all ministries that chose to participate. This working group developed and continues to improve and implement a comprehensive IT control framework.

We also initiated a survey of the IT control framework's core stakeholders to assess the IT control framework and the guidance Service Alberta provided. We contracted with an independent third party to survey all of the ministries' CIOs and other persons that the CIOs and Service Alberta identified as being significantly involved in development or as users of the framework. Overall, the survey indicated that the project is well received and is meeting the needs of CIOs and other stakeholders.

Through this survey we found that the majority of respondents are familiar with the project and are implementing an IT control framework. A large majority also think that the policy instruments (directives, standards and guidelines) and practices are applicable to their department and useful as guidance to implement an IT control framework. However, the survey also identified areas for improvement, such as project governance, roles and responsibilities, and communication within the project and between Service Alberta and the ministries.

Based on what the department and CIO Council have accomplished, we consider this recommendation to Service Alberta implemented. However, there is room to improve the IT control framework project. We will continue to work with Service Alberta and the CIO Council to ensure that the IT control framework and the guidance to implement it continues to improve to help remediate risks to IT strategies.

¹ Report of the Auditor General of Alberta—April 2008, no. 7, page 170.