

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and Department of General Services

Investigations of Improper Activities by State Employees, July 2008 Through December 2008

ALLEGATION I2007-0891 (REPORT I2009-1), APRIL 2009

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's response as of March 2010 and Department of General Services' response as of September 2009

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (Corrections) and the Department of General Services (General Services) wasted \$580,000 in state funds by continuing to lease 5,900 square feet of office space that Corrections left unoccupied for more than four years. Delays and inefficient conduct by both state agencies contributed to the waste of state funds.

Finding #1: Corrections failed to adequately describe its need for space and to promptly fulfill its responsibilities in the leasing process.

Over the four-year period that Corrections was seeking office space, it failed to give General Services an accurate description of its space needs and to promptly provide required information and approvals that were necessary to facilitate the lease process. Its failures contributed to General Services' delays in meeting Corrections' space needs and caused Corrections to waste state funds.

We recommended that Corrections require its employees to confirm leasing needs before submitting a request to General Services to ensure that accurate information is communicated, and to promptly review and approve required lease information to facilitate the process. In addition, we recommended that Corrections obtain training from General Services about the leasing process and General Services' expectations of Corrections' staff in charge of requesting leasing services.

Corrections' Action: Corrective action taken.

Corrections informed us that it moved into the office space in May 2009. Corrections indicated subsequently that it initiated several improvements to its leasing procedures and lease project management. In particular, Corrections reported that it had refined its lease project processes to include conducting field reviews of its leased space. In addition, it stated that it had completed a business plan to standardize leasing processes, ensure quality assurance, and strengthen lease inventory records management. Further, in September 2009 Corrections completed a lease process flow diagram. Finally, in March 2010 it noted that its remaining leasing staff attended a General Services' training course on the State's leasing process. Corrections also notified us that its project tracking system allowed it to track and monitor the status, schedule, and budget of leasing projects and that it still had plans to develop a formal leasing database but was considering new software options.

Investigative Highlight . . .

Because of multiple delays and inefficient conduct, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (Corrections) wasted \$580,000 in state funds from January 2005 through June 2008, and the Department of General Services has taken more than four years to complete Corrections' request for office space.

Finding #2: General Services failed to properly exercise its project management responsibilities.

General Services was slow to act on Corrections' request for a reduction of its leased space, and it allowed the negotiation of a new lease to drag on for an unreasonable amount of time while the State continued to pay for unused space. Furthermore, its leasing actions failed to ensure that Corrections' request was efficiently processed without wasting state funds and time.

We recommended that General Services establish reasonable processing and completion timelines for lease activities. We also recommended General Services strengthen its oversight role to prevent state agencies from unnecessarily using leased space when state-owned space is available and to create guidelines for leasing representatives. Finally, we recommended that General Services develop a procedure to evaluate all costs incurred in the processing of a request, including any rent paid on unoccupied space, to ensure that it makes cost-effective decisions when considering the feasibility of a space request.

General Services' Action: Corrective action taken.

In May 2009 General Services confirmed Corrections' occupancy of the office space. In addition, General Services updated its timelines for its lease activities to extend to 36 months from 24 months the maximum time to complete leasing projects. Furthermore, General Services stated that the addition of 15 space planning staff has allowed for a more manageable distribution of its workload to improve the efficiency of planning activities and for timely resolution of critical issues associated with lease projects. It also provided us with its two new policies that, effective May 1, 2009, established procedures for its staff in resolving lease project disputes and in monitoring lease project progress. In addition, to strengthen its enforcement over using state-owned space, General Services indicated that it established policies and practices requiring it to address conflicts with state agencies regarding the use of available state-owned space. Finally, in August 2009 General Services provided us with a policy that, effective June 1, 2009, established its initial processing of lease requests as not to exceed 18 days.