

---

## MEMORANDUM

---

**TO:** Community Development Commission  
**FROM:** CDC Working Group  
**SUBJECT:** Findings and Recommendations of the CSBG and CDC Composition Working Group  
**DATE:** March 8, 2016

---

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

#### FOR THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG) PROGRAM:

City council recommendation to initiate an audit of the CSBG program by the Austin city auditor, with a focus on the following:<sup>1</sup>

- Effectiveness of delivery of services. Client interviews should be conducted to produce both a quantitative *and* qualitative assessment.
- An accounting of where and how CSBG funds are being allocated.
- An examination of the employment services functions of the CSBG grant. What sort of jobs do clients end up receiving and keeping?
- An investigation of staff turnover within CSBG funded positions.

#### FOR THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION:

City council recommendation to initiate an audit of the Community Development Commission by the Austin city auditor with a focus on the following:<sup>2</sup>

- Does the present composition of the Community Development Commission best reflect the needs of the poor and similar populations in Austin?
- Should the composition of the commission be reflective of city council districts?
- Does the Community Development Commission possess the authority to fulfill its charge of effectively advocating for the poor?

---

<sup>1</sup> The audit should not be constrained to these topics. We offer them as points of emphasis, not as restrictions on what the auditor could or should examine.

<sup>2</sup> Again, these are recommendations. The auditor should feel free to examine whatever he or she determines is important in addition to these suggestions.

---

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:**

**FOR THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG) PROGRAM:**

1. The Blackland Center was not fully staffed and was underfunded for two years.
  - No center director.
  - Social worker and nurse retired and went unreplaced.
  - Funding for these positions supposedly went into an unaccountable "Surplus Fund." Such transfers should be approved by the neighborhood center and the CDC.
2. The neighborhood centers do not best reflect actual client needs.
  - Hours are very limited; the centers are not open on Fridays, federal holidays, or weekends and in practice are only consistently open 15-20 days per month.
3. There is a perception that recent funding increases for the Health and Human Services Department are prioritizing administrative salary increases and new hires instead of optimization of existing service delivery and improvement in employee morale. The Austin City Auditor should investigate this.

**FOR THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION:**

1. The current sixteen member composition of the CDC is not a Tri-Partite board as strongly suggested by federal regulations for CSBG.
2. TDHCA has the authority to exempt the City of Austin from the Tri-Partite board requirement, but this should be done *explicitly* and in writing. To date this has not taken place.
3. TDHCA has not exercised effective oversight of Austin's CSBG program. The agency only has records--incomplete records--dating back to 2005. An independent audit is more than warranted.
4. The federal Department of Health and Human Services could also be doing a better job of overseeing agencies such as TDHCA. For instance the federal online database of CSBG tribal contacts is woefully out of date.
5. Depending on the findings of the Austin City Auditor and further findings by the CDC it may be best policy for the CDC to recommend that the CSBG program should be managed by an independent non-profit in partnership with the city, instead of the city directly managing the program.