

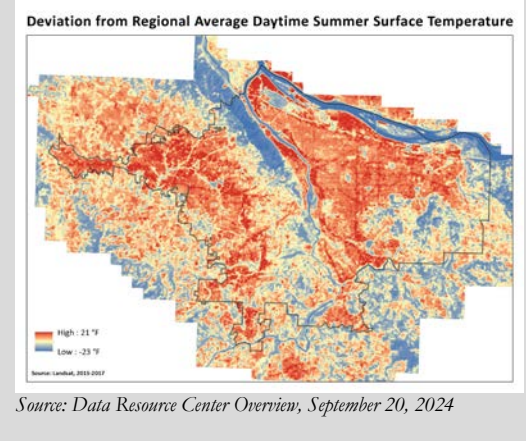
Research Center Follow-Up Audit

Why this audit is important

In 2020 our office released an audit titled *Research Center: Improve project management to set clear expectations and help assess tradeoffs*. The audit included eight recommendations to set clear expectations with clients, help prioritize work, and ensure resources aligned with expectations.

Metro’s Data Resource Center (DRC) supports the Metro Council, internal departments, external clients, and the public by providing information, mapping, and technical services to support public policy and regulatory compliance.

The purpose of this audit was to follow up on the recommendations from the 2020 audit by reviewing project documentation, communication with clients, and project prioritization for projects started by the Research Center in the last two years.



What we found

The Data Resource Center made progress implementing the 2020 audit recommendations. Four were fully implemented, three were in progress, and one was not implemented. Continued focus on consistent documentation and a standardized practice for communication with clients and management will set teams up for success.

2020 Audit Recommendations	Status
To set clear expectation for projects, the Research Center should:	
1. Use project proposals to document the scope, schedule, budget, and risks for each project.	In process
2. Formally document the status of projects by tracking the scope, schedule, and actual cost of each project.	In process
3. Ensure project proposals and project status information is available to project teams, clients, and management.	In process
To help prioritize its work, the Research Center should:	
4. Establish a process to reach agreement on the scope, schedule, and cost of maintenance and data updates for projects and programs.	Implemented
5. Establish and document a process for reviewing and approving proposed changes to ongoing projects and programs among project teams, clients, and management.	Not implemented
6. Complete work to prioritize agency-wide data for FY 2020-21, and update as things change.	Implemented
To ensure resources and expectations for the Research Center are aligned, Metro should:	
7. Document the funding model for the department and communicate it to department stakeholders.	Implemented
8. Determine the need for an ongoing governance structure to prioritize agency-wide data after FY 2020-21.	Implemented

Improved project proposal templates, a new project tracker tool, and the use of project management software all contributed to the implemented recommendations. Additionally, project prioritization was thorough and successfully guided work while considering agency and client needs.

More consistent use of tools like project proposals and information management systems would fully implement the in-process recommendations. Communication with clients should be standardized and documented in some form. Though the funding model was simplified, it may still present a risk of funding gaps if resources are not available to cover the loss of anticipated revenue from client projects. More conservative budgeting could help to mitigate this risk.