



U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

More Operational and Financial Oversight Needed

Highlights of [GAO-04-18](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on the Constitution, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Over the past 10 years, GAO, the Congress, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and others have raised numerous concerns about the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. GAO was asked to assess (1) the adequacy of the Commission’s project management procedures, (2) whether the Commission’s controls over contracting services and managing contracts are sufficient, and (3) the extent of recent oversight of the Commission’s financial activities.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that the Commission adopt procedures that provide for increased commissioner involvement in projects; establish greater controls over its contracting activities in order to be in compliance with federal regulations; and take steps immediately to meet the financial statement preparation and audit requirements of the Accountability of Tax Dollars Act of 2002 for fiscal year 2004.

In commenting on a draft of this report, four of the commissioners agreed with GAO’s conclusions and recommendations. GAO did not receive comments from the remaining four commissioners. In separate comments, the staff director indicated he will consider implementing GAO’s recommendations but took exception with many of GAO’s findings of management weaknesses at the Commission.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-18.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Robert E. Robertson at (202) 512-7215 or robertsonr@gao.gov.

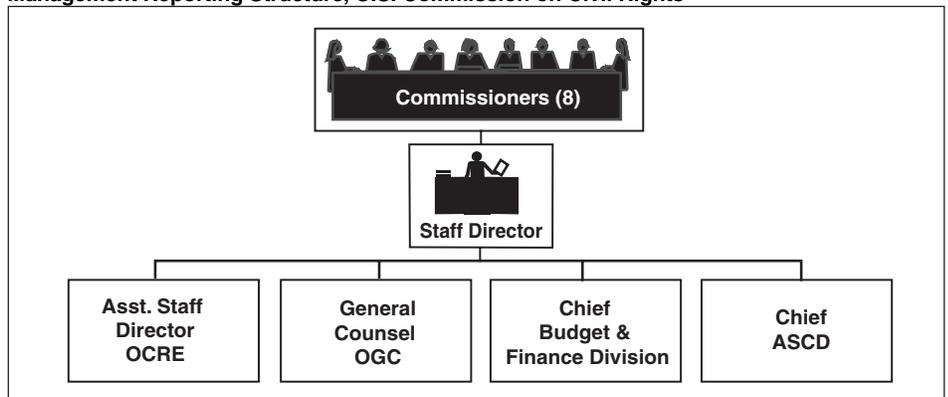
What GAO Found

The Commission has established a set of project management procedures for commissioners and staff to follow when they plan, implement, and report the results of approved Commission projects. However, the procedures lack, among other things, a requirement for systematic commissioner input throughout projects. As a result, commissioners lack the opportunity to review many of the reports and other products drafted by Commission staff before products are released to the public, which serves to significantly reduce the opportunity for commissioners to help shape a report’s findings, recommendations, and policy implications of civil rights issues.

The Commission lacks sufficient management control over its contracting procedures. The Commission routinely did not follow proper procedures for its fiscal year 2002 contracting activities. For the Commission’s largest dollar contract, key documentation on how the contract was initially awarded was missing from contract files. Moreover, Commission officials did not follow the legal requirements to obtain competition for its subsequent media services contracts. As a result, the Commission did not have all of the information it should have had to determine whether its contracts provided the best value to the government.

Little, if any, external oversight of the Commission’s financial activities has taken place in recent years. An independent accounting firm has not audited the Commission’s financial statements for the last 12 years. Although the Accountability of Tax Dollars Act of 2002 requires the Commission—along with certain other executive agencies—to have its financial statements independently audited annually, the Commission has been granted a waiver by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) from compliance with the financial statement preparation and audit requirements of the act for the fiscal years 2002 and 2003 audit cycles, which OMB was authorized to waive during an initial transition period of up to 2 years.

Management Reporting Structure, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights



Source: GAO analysis.