

Why OCA Did This Study

Lifeguard Services performs thousands of water rescues each year, assisting San Diegans and tourists who visit our beaches. With 17 miles of coastline and 4,600 acres around Mission Bay Park, San Diego offers a wide variety of beaches and amenities. The Lifeguard Services Division (Lifeguard Services) protects San Diego residents and visitors through a variety of safety and enforcement services.

In accordance with the City Auditor's FY 2015 Work Plan, we conducted a performance audit of Lifeguard Services planning and operations. Our primary audit objective was to determine if Lifeguard Services is conducting adequate workforce planning for succession and diversification challenges. An additional objective was to identify other potential funding mechanisms to support Lifeguard Services' "Five Year Needs Assessment."

What OCA Recommends

OCA made three [recommendations](#):

- Lifeguard Services should develop a more formalized workforce plan to identify critical work functions and staffing requirements
- Expand its recruiting efforts to increase ethnic and gender diversity among Lifeguards
- Work with the City's Real Estate Assets Department to evaluate fee terms of future concession contracts to be more consistent with other municipalities and take into account lifeguard costs to oversee the concession operations

Management agreed to all recommendations.

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Lifeguard Services Should Strengthen Its Workforce Plan, and the City Should Explore Options to Increase Funding for Lifeguard Operations

What OCA Found

- [Lifeguard skill sets can take many years to develop and certify](#). We estimate that about 40 percent of the current Lifeguard Services Division (Lifeguard Services) workforce will be eligible to retire within the next four years. We found that Lifeguard Services does not have a formalized workforce plan to address future retirements and separations, as well as operational growth. As a result, Lifeguard Services risks facing a critical skills gap in the next five to 10 years.
- Like many other Lifeguarding agencies, San Diego's Lifeguard Services is largely Caucasian and male. Some [barriers to a workforce](#) that better reflects San Diego's diverse demographics, including females and Hispanic individuals, include factors both in and outside of Lifeguard Services' control. However, there are diversification strategies that Lifeguard Services could include in its workforce planning to encourage a more diverse workforce.
- Lifeguard Services plays a crucial role in maintaining the vitality of the local tourism economy, in part by, assisting in the operation of businesses located on public beaches—such as kayak rentals and surf camps. [It is important the City maximize potential revenues from businesses operating on public property](#). We found that the City currently receives a lower percentage of annual concession revenues from businesses operating on public beaches than peer jurisdictions.

