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GENERAL GOVERNMENT
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B-200196

September 9, 1980

The Honorable Thomas F. Eagleton
Chairman, Subcommittee on Governmental
Efficiency and the District of
Columbia
Committee on Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Subject: *T* Review of the District of Columbia's
Automatic Data Processing Operations *J*
(GGD-80-103)

As you requested in your August 27, 1980, letter, we are reporting on the results so far of our ongoing work as it relates to the District of Columbia's data processing personnel and training practices. As you know, the District relies on automatic data processing resources in administering programs and delivering governmental services. In some agencies, data processing support is so important that many programs could not be operated without it.

The purpose of our efforts is to assess the overall effectiveness of the District's management of its automatic data processing resources and recommend improvements where needed. Accordingly, we are looking at the processes for long-range planning, software development, computer production, computer performance evaluation, computer installation management, and certain areas of contracting. Because our preliminary work indicated that the District may be experiencing problems attracting and retaining employees and keeping them abreast with the ever-changing technology of data processing, we are also gathering some limited information in these areas to identify whether any problems exist, the extent of the problems, and their effect on operations. In this regard, our review objectives are not to comprehensively evaluate the District's personnel management in such areas as requirements determination, recruiting, staffing, development, utilization, evaluation, and retention.



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Thus far, we have visited the University of the District of Columbia and the Department of Transportation. We are currently working at the Metropolitan Police Department. We will be visiting and gathering information on automatic data processing operations at other District departments as well.

Our work, so far, has shown that the District of Columbia does not have formal career development programs and training programs for automatic data processing personnel. Because formal career development programs do not exist, career opportunities and career paths are not as clear as they should be for existing and prospective employees. It appears that the lack of formal training plans and programs has hampered the District's ability to keep some data processing personnel abreast of changing technology. District officials have expressed some concern over their ability to attract and retain highly qualified individuals because of limited career opportunities and training.

At the city level or at the three agencies we visited, there are no formal data processing career development programs to identify and define computer personnel positions and salaries; specific skills and knowledge needed at each stage of the career ladder; alternate career paths available for each type of data processing personnel; and the types of training and experience required for career advancement.

According to data processing officials at the three agencies, the lack of formal career development programs has limited their ability to attract and retain highly qualified individuals. For example, a data processing official at the University said they had problems attracting a qualified individual for a systems software position because the salary offered was too low. As a result, the University hired an individual not fully qualified for the position.

In addition, data processing officials told us that because the agencies lack career opportunities, a large number of data processing employees are leaving the District for employment with private industry and the Federal Government. We were told that 14 employees have left the Metropolitan Police Department since December 1979; 18 employees have left the University since the fall of 1978; and 11 employees have left the Department of Transportation since 1976.

There are no formal city wide training policies and programs to assure the systematic development of employee skills. Formal training policies and programs are necessary to identify and provide the types and levels of training required to ensure an adequate number of properly skilled employees. We also found that there are no formal training policies, plans or programs at the three agencies we visited. As a result, training provided to employees seems to be minimal.

The University had developed for fiscal year 1980, a training schedule for 16 of its data processing personnel. However, due to budget problems, only one employee attended a training course. Nine employees received training in programming languages during fiscal year 1979; none were trained in fiscal year 1978. At the Department of Transportation, there has been one training course for computer programmers since 1976, and it was the only training offered to data processing employees during this period. Our work at the Metropolitan Police Department is not yet complete. However, data processing officials told us that there are no formal training plans or programs.

One result of the absence of training is that persons may be in positions for which they are not fully qualified. For example, Metropolitan Police Department data processing officials said there are some employees not functioning at the skill level required by their positions. One official

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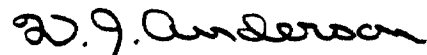
said this condition occurred because training has not been made available to keep staff abreast with changing data processing environments and technology. The official also said this condition is beginning to affect their ability to operate. Department of Transportation officials told us that a contractor was hired to assume management of the data processing activity because of dissatisfaction with in-house data processing management. University officials have also told us that because of a lack of training, persons are filling positions for which they are not completely qualified.

Data processing officials at the three organizations believe training is important to keep up with changing technology but said an absence of funds has limited their ability to train employees. Police and Transportation data processing officials believe that limited training opportunities have also affected their ability to retain employees and may have negative effects on recruiting and hiring new employees.

In order to provide an interim report to you before September 10, 1980, we were unable to obtain the written comments of city administration officials on our findings as developed so far. We have, however, discussed these matters with department and University officials during our review.

I hope this interim report will be of assistance to you. As agreed with your office, we are providing a copy to the Mayor, the City Council, and other appropriate District officials.

Sincerely yours,



William J. Anderson
Director