

State of Minnesota



Office of the State Auditor

Julie Blaha
State Auditor

Audit Practice Division

Stearns County St. Cloud, Minnesota

Management and Compliance Report

Year Ended December 31, 2024

Stearns County
St. Cloud, Minnesota

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**Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and
Other Matters Based on an Audit of Financial Statements Performed in
Accordance with *Government Auditing Standards***

Independent Auditor's Report

Board of County Commissioners
Stearns County
St. Cloud, Minnesota

We have audited, in accordance with the auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, the financial statements of the governmental activities, the discretely presented component unit, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of Stearns County, Minnesota, as of and for the year ended December 31, 2024, including the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) of Stearns County component unit as of and for the year ended June 30, 2024, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise the County's basic financial statements, and have issued our report thereon dated August 12, 2025. Our report includes a reference to other auditors who audited the financial statements of the HRA of Stearns County, as described in our report on the County's financial statements. This report does not include the results of the other auditors' testing of internal control over financial reporting or compliance and other matters that are reported on separately by those auditors.

Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

In planning and performing our audit of the financial statements, we considered Stearns County's internal control over financial reporting as a basis for designing audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances for the purpose of expressing our opinions on the financial statements, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the County's internal control over financial reporting. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of the County's internal control over financial reporting.

A deficiency in internal control over financial reporting exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control over financial reporting, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity's financial statements will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control over financial reporting that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control over financial reporting was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Given these limitations, during our audit we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting that we consider to be material weaknesses. However, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies may exist that were not identified.

Report on Compliance and Other Matters

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether Stearns County's financial statements are free from material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the financial statements. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit and, accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

Minnesota Legal Compliance

In connection with our audit, nothing came to our attention that caused us to believe that Stearns County failed to comply with the provisions of the contracting – bid laws, depositories of public funds and public investments, conflicts of interest, public indebtedness, claims and disbursements, and miscellaneous provisions sections of the *Minnesota Legal Compliance Audit Guide for Counties*, promulgated by the State Auditor pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 6.65, insofar as they relate to accounting matters. However, our audit was not directed primarily toward obtaining knowledge of such noncompliance. Accordingly, had we performed additional procedures, other matters may have come to our attention regarding the County's noncompliance with the above referenced provisions, insofar as they relate to accounting matters.

Purpose of This Report

The purpose of this report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance, and the provisions of the *Minnesota Legal Compliance Audit Guide for Counties* and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the County's internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. This report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the County's internal control over financial reporting and compliance. Accordingly, this communication is not suitable for any other purpose.

/s/Julie Blaha

Julie Blaha
State Auditor

August 12, 2025

/s/Chad Struss

Chad Struss, CPA
Deputy State Auditor

**Report on Compliance for Each Major Federal Program and Report on Internal
Control Over Compliance Required by the Uniform Guidance**Independent Auditor's Report

Board of County Commissioners
Stearns County
St. Cloud, Minnesota

Report on Compliance for Each Major Federal Program***Opinion on Each Major Federal Program***

We have audited Stearns County's compliance with the types of compliance requirements identified as subject to audit in the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) *Compliance Supplement* that could have a direct and material effect on each of Stearns County's major federal programs for the year ended December 31, 2024. Stearns County's major federal programs are identified in the Summary of Auditor's Results section of the accompanying Schedule of Findings and Questioned Costs.

In our opinion, Stearns County complied, in all material respects, with the compliance requirements referred to above that could have a direct and material effect on each of its major federal programs for the year ended December 31, 2024.

Basis for Opinion on Each Major Federal Program

We conducted our audit of compliance in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America; the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States; and the audit requirements of Title 2 U.S. *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance). Our responsibilities under those standards and the Uniform Guidance are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance section of our report.

We are required to be independent of Stearns County and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion on compliance for each major federal program. Our audit does not provide a legal determination of Stearns County's compliance with the compliance requirements referred to above.

Other Matter – Federal Expenditure Not Included in the Compliance Audit

Stearns County's basic financial statements include the operations of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) of Stearns County component unit as of June 30, 2024, which expended \$1,986,941 in federal awards which are not included in Stearns County's Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards during the year ended December 31, 2024. Our compliance audit, described in the Opinion on Each Major Federal Program section, does not include the operations of the HRA of Stearns County because other auditors were engaged to perform a single audit in accordance with the Uniform Guidance.

Responsibilities of Management for Compliance

Management is responsible for compliance with the requirements referred to above and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of effective internal control over compliance with the requirements of laws, statutes, regulations, rules and provisions of contracts or grant agreements applicable to Stearns County's federal programs.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether material noncompliance with the compliance requirements referred to above occurred, whether due to fraud or error, and express an opinion on Stearns County's compliance based on our audit. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and, therefore, is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America, *Government Auditing Standards*, and the Uniform Guidance will always detect material noncompliance when it exists. The risk of not detecting material noncompliance resulting from fraud is higher than for that resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Noncompliance with the compliance requirements referred to above is considered material, if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, it would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user of the report on compliance about Stearns County's compliance with the requirements of each major federal program as a whole.

In performing an audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America, *Government Auditing Standards*, and the Uniform Guidance, we:

- exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit;
- identify and assess the risks of material noncompliance, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the County's compliance with the compliance requirements referred to above and performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances; and
- obtain an understanding of the County's internal control over compliance relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, and to test and report on internal control over compliance in accordance with the Uniform Guidance, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the County's internal control over compliance. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and any significant deficiencies and material weaknesses in internal control over compliance that we identified during the audit.

Report on Internal Control Over Compliance

A deficiency in internal control over compliance exists when the design or operation of a control over compliance does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, noncompliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program on a timely basis. *A material weakness in internal control over compliance* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control over compliance, such that there is a reasonable possibility that material noncompliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency in internal control over compliance* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control over compliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program that is less severe than a material weakness in internal control over compliance, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control over compliance was for the limited purpose described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance section above and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control over compliance that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control over compliance. Given these limitations, during our audit we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control over compliance that we consider to be material weaknesses, as defined above. However, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control over compliance may exist that were not identified.

Our audit was not designed for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control over compliance. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.

The purpose of this report on internal control over compliance is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over compliance and the results of that testing based on the requirements of the Uniform Guidance. Accordingly, this report is not suitable for any other purpose.

/s/Julie Blaha

Julie Blaha
State Auditor

August 12, 2025

/s/Chad Struss

Chad Struss, CPA
Deputy State Auditor

Stearns County St. Cloud, Minnesota

Schedule of Findings and Questioned Costs For the Year Ended December 31, 2024

Section I – Summary of Auditor’s Results

Financial Statements

Type of report the auditor issued on whether the financial statements audited were prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles: **Unmodified**

Internal control over financial reporting:

- Material weaknesses identified? **No**
- Significant deficiencies identified? **None reported**

Noncompliance material to the financial statements noted? **No**

Federal Awards

Internal control over the major federal programs:

- Material weaknesses identified? **No**
- Significant deficiencies identified? **None reported**

Type of auditor’s report issued on compliance for the major federal programs: **Unmodified**

Any audit findings disclosed that are required to be reported in accordance with 2 CFR 200.516(a)? **No**

Identification of the major federal programs:

Assistance Listing Number	Name of Federal Program or Cluster
10.557	WIC Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
21.027	COVID-19 – Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds
93.563	Child Support Services
93.658	Foster Care Title IV-E

Dollar threshold used to distinguish between Type A and Type B programs: \$946,887.

Stearns County qualified as a low-risk auditee? **No**

Section II – Financial Statement Findings

No matters were reported.

Section III – Federal Award Findings and Questioned Costs

No matters were reported.



Randy R. Schreifels
Office of the County Auditor-Treasurer

Representation of Stearns County
St. Cloud, Minnesota
Summary Schedule of Prior Audit Findings
For the Year Ended December 31, 2024

Finding Number: 2022-002

Year of Finding Origination: 2022

Finding Title: Eligibility

Program: 93.558 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Summary of Condition: The Minnesota Department of Human Services maintains the computer system, MAXIS, which is used by the County to support the eligibility determination process. In the case files tested for compliance with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program eligibility requirements, not all documentation was available, updated, or input correctly to support participant eligibility. The following exceptions were noted in the sample of 40 cases tested:

- One case file had an incomplete combined application form (CAF) and incorrect assets entered based on the CAF;
- One case file had a parent relationship entered in MAXIS that was not supported by the case file documentation; and
- Two case files had information in MAXIS that did not agree to supporting documentation in the case file.

Summary of Corrective Action Previously Reported: The County will implement additional TANF targeted case reviews as well as additional training to staff on the importance of documentation alignment and record keeping when determining eligibility.

Status: Not Corrected. High volume and staffing shortages have resulted in rushing to complete cases. Expectation is to monitor verifications and being diligent about inspecting case work prior to actions being taken on cases to prevent simple mistakes.

Correction Action Planned: The County will continue to implement TANF targeted case reviews as well as host weekly unit meetings to ask questions and clarifications on case specific questions or policy inquiries. This will continue to bridge knowledge gaps and highlight the importance of documentation alignment and attention to detail across the unit.