

Internal Audit Division

Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2026



**N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Internal Audit Division**

Message from the Chief Audit Officer

Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) was a successful and productive year for the Internal Audit Division.

Within our primary services, we completed nine internal audit projects, two special investigations, ten special projects, twelve data analytics projects, and provided over 125 hours of technical assistance.

The Internal Audit Division achieved three out of four of its annual performance targets for FY26.



Internal Audit's project results for FY26 included value-added recommendations for:

- the N.C. Seed Laboratory to strengthen compliance, accountability, and operational consistency,
- cybersecurity governance enhancements, and
- procedures to reduce the risk of P-Card fraud.

We thank the Department's senior management team for their continued support and look forward to adding more value for our stakeholders in Fiscal Year 2026!

Derek Allred, CIA, CISA, CFE
Chief Audit Officer



Internal Audit Division Overview

The Internal Audit Division was established in Fiscal Year 2014. The Division's mission is:

To strengthen the Department's ability to create, protect, and sustain value by providing senior management with independent, risk-based, and objective assurance, advice, insight, and foresight.

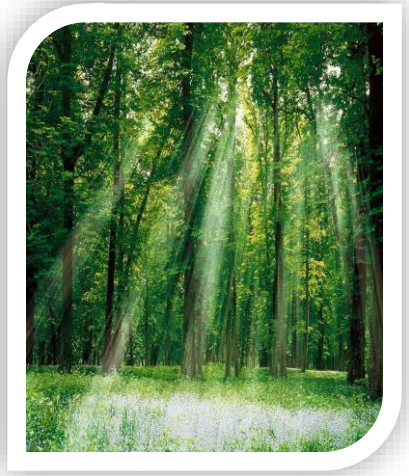
Staffing

The Internal Audit Division is comprised of the Chief Audit Officer and two internal auditors.

Certifications

Our staff hold professional audit certifications including:

- ❖ One Certified Internal Auditor (CIA),
- ❖ One Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA),
- ❖ One Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE),
- ❖ One Certified Government Auditing Professional (CGAP), and
- ❖ One Certification in Risk Management Assurance (CRMA).



Training

Professional development helps our staff to stay up to date with emerging topics and best practices within our profession, which improves our ability to provide high quality services to the Department. Individual training plans are developed and carried out for each staff member annually based on his/her knowledge, skills, abilities, and needs. During FY26, audit staff received 216 hours in continuing professional education.



Primary Work Allocation				
Assurance Services	Advisory Services	Data Analytics	Follow-Up Audits/Monitoring	Special Investigations

Assurance Services

Services through which internal auditors perform objective assessments to provide assurance. Examples of assurance services include compliance, financial, operational/performance, and technology engagements. Internal auditors may provide limited or reasonable assurance, depending on the nature, timing, and extent of procedures performed.

Advisory Services

Services through which internal auditors provide advice to an organization's stakeholders without providing assurance or taking on management responsibilities. Examples include advice, facilitation, and training. Examples include advising on the design and implementation of new policies, processes, systems, and products; providing forensic services; providing training; and facilitating discussions about risks and controls.

Data Analytics

Data analytics engagements involve a systematic process through which we gather data, assess the quality of the data, cleanse the data, perform analyses and provide the results to management for informed decision making.

Follow-Up Audits/Monitoring

Follow-Up Audits/monitoring engagements are completed for any engagement observations deemed high risk to the Department.

Special Investigations

Investigations result from tips reported to our office via the Office of the State Auditor, our internal fraud, waste and abuse hotline and other sources. During FY26, the Internal Audit Division received and processed six investigation tips.



Performance Metrics

We track four measures annually to assess our performance.

Percent of Audit Plan Delivered during the Year (Productivity)

Target:	75% Audit Plan Completion
Actual:	100% of Original Audit Plan Completed and 100% of the Revised Audit Plan Completed

Our audit plan, approved on June 23, 2025, included six internal audit projects. Of the six projects on our original plan, we completed all six. We later revised the audit plan by adding two investigations and an audit. We completed 100% of the projects on our revised audit plan, exceeding our target.

Percent of Internal Audit Projects Completed within Budget (Efficiency)

Target:	80% of Projects Completed within + or – 15% of Budgeted Hours
Actual:	75% of Projects Completed within + or – 15% of Budgeted Hours

Budgeted hours are the number of hours we allocate to complete each internal audit project based on our estimates.

Customer Satisfaction (Effectiveness)

Target:	Average Rating of 40 out of 50
Actual:	Average Rating of 47

At the end of each audit engagement, project sponsors are asked to complete a survey evaluating our audit team's work to facilitate continuous improvement. Questions on the survey address audit communication, professionalism of our staff, degree of disruption to operations and whether the audit added value. For each question, responses are provided on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest possible score. The maximum survey score is 50.

Conformance to Global Internal Audit Standards (Quality)

Target:	Generally Achieves
Actual:	Fully Achieves

Our recent internal quality assurance review demonstrated a Global Internal Audit Standards compliance result of "Fully Achieves," the highest score the Internal Audit Division can achieve.



Disclosures

The Internal Audit Division adheres to the IIA's Global Internal Audit Standards. The following items are being disclosed in conformance with the Standards.

Audit Charter

The Internal Audit Division audit charter has been reviewed, updated, and approved by senior management as of July 21, 2026.

Mandate

The Internal Audit Division will adhere to the requirements within General Statute Chapter 143, Article 79 which established the internal audit function within the Department.

Purpose

The purpose of the internal audit function is to strengthen the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' ability to create, protect, and sustain value by providing senior management with independent, risk-based, and objective assurance, advice, insight, and foresight.

The Internal Audit Division is established by General Statute Chapter 143, Article 79. The Internal Audit Division's responsibilities are defined by these laws. The North Carolina Council of Internal Auditing has authority to set policy related to the Internal Audit Division.

Professionalism

The Department's internal audit function will adhere to the mandatory elements of The Institute of Internal Auditors' International Professional Practices Framework, which are the Global Internal Audit Standards and Topical Requirements. The chief audit officer will report annually to senior management regarding the internal audit function's conformance with the Standards, which will be assessed through a quality assurance and improvement program.

The Internal Audit Division will adhere to the requirements within General Statute Chapter 143, Article 79.

The Internal Audit Division will adhere to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' relevant policies and procedures and the Internal Audit Division's internal policies and procedures manual.

Lastly, dependent upon engagement type, the Internal Audit Division will adhere to the Code of Ethics and Information System Audit and Assurance Standards issued by the Information Systems Audit and Control Association, the CFE Code of Professional



Disclosures (Continued)

Standards issued by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners or standards of another professional organization as deemed necessary.

Authority

The internal audit function's authority is created by its direct reporting relationship to senior management. Such authority allows for unrestricted access to senior management.

Senior management authorizes the internal audit function to:

- Have full and unrestricted access to all functions, data, records, information, physical property, and personnel pertinent to carrying out internal audit responsibilities. Internal auditors are accountable for confidentiality and safeguarding records and information.
- Allocate resources, set frequencies, select subjects, determine scopes of work, apply techniques, and issue communications to accomplish the function's objectives.
- Obtain assistance from the necessary personnel of the Department and other specialized services from within or outside the Department to complete internal audit services.

Responsibility

The scope of internal auditing encompasses, but is not limited to, the examination and evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of the organization's governance, risk management and internal controls as well as the quality of performance in carrying out assigned responsibilities to achieve the Department's goals and objectives.

Independence and Objectivity

The Internal Audit Division will remain free from interference by any element in the Department, including matters of audit selection, scope, procedures, frequency, timing, or report content to permit maintenance of a necessary independent and objective mental attitude.

Internal auditors will have no direct operational responsibility or authority over any of the activities audited. Accordingly, they will not implement internal controls, develop procedures, install systems, prepare records, or engage in any other activity that may impair the internal auditor's judgment.



Disclosures (Continued)

Internal auditors will exhibit the highest level of professional objectivity in gathering, evaluating, and communicating information about the activity or process being examined. Internal auditors will make a balanced assessment of all the relevant circumstances and not be unduly influenced by their own interests or by others in forming judgments.

Current Impairments to Independence or Objectivity

The Internal Audit Division has no current independence or objectivity impairments requiring immediate action.

Resolution of Management's Acceptance of Risks

Each engagement can potentially result in observations concerning risks to the Department. In response to high and medium level risk rated observations, audit clients are required to develop management action plans to address the risks. When a management action plan is not developed and/or not implemented resulting in an unacceptable level of risk to the Department, the Chief Audit Officer must communicate the matter to senior management. There were no instances to report for FY26.

Resources

The Internal Audit Division is currently understaffed by at least three positions and by as many as eight positions based on an internal audit staffing analysis¹ completed by the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management Central Internal Audit Office, and our annual risk assessment identification of high-risk audit topics. Seventy-eight high priority audit and advisory topics were declined for Fiscal Year 2027. A vacant internal audit position was transferred to the Purchasing Section in August of 2019. Understaffing decreases the Division's ability to cover many of the Department's high-risk areas, resulting in the Department being exposed to a higher level of risk. At a minimum, the additional staffing needed would include an Internal Audit Supervisor to perform work quality reviews as well as advanced audit work, an Internal Auditor III, and an Information Technology Auditor. Prior year funding coupled with adjustments for inflation and any approved salary increases will be sufficient to cover the current year's work plan and expenses. Building in funding for the three additional positions mentioned above plus operational unit cost increases for the positions would help Internal Audit to cover more of the high priority engagement topics declined for Fiscal Year 2027. Please see Exhibit A on page 8 for more details. The item highlighted in blue below was excluded from the FY26 budget but was included in the FY24 budget and is considered a critical item for operational purposes.

¹ January 11th, 2023 Council of Internal Auditing Meeting Materials



Disclosures (Continued)

Exhibit A

Accounts	FY26 Budgeted Amounts	FY27 Budget Needed to Accomplish Work	Minimum FY27 Budget Needed for Enhanced Coverage of High-Risk Engagement Topics
51210000 SPA-REG SALARIES	\$ 295,304.00	\$ 301,536.62	\$ 602,437.62
51460000 EPA&SPA-LONGVTY PAY	\$ 3,880.00	\$ 3,351.27	\$ 10,121.54
515 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	\$ 122,501.00	\$ 169,117.72	\$ 343,206.29
51 PERSONAL SERVICES	\$ 421,685.00	\$ 474,005.61	\$ 955,765.45
52148000 APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT	\$ 2,530.00	\$ 2,637.53	\$ 6,154.23
5214B000 IT SUBSCRIPTION SUPPORT	\$ 5,509.00	\$ 5,743.13	\$ 13,400.64
52199000 MISC CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 101.00	\$ 105.29	\$ 245.68
52441000 MAINT AGRMT-OTHER SOFTWARE	\$ 175.00	\$ 182.44	\$ 425.69
52534000 RENT/LEASE-PC/PRINTER	\$ 83.00	\$ 86.53	\$ 201.90
52714000 TRANSP-GRND - IN STATE	\$ 779.00	\$ 812.11	\$ 1,894.92
52721000 LODGING - IN STATE	\$ 1,311.00	\$ 1,366.72	\$ 3,189.01
52722000 LODGING-OUT STATE IN US	\$ 350.00	\$ 364.88	\$ 851.38
52724000 MEALS - IN STATE	\$ 671.00	\$ 699.52	\$ 1,632.21
52811000 TELEPHONE SERVICE	\$ 1,199.00	\$ 1,249.96	\$ 2,916.57
52812000 TELECOMMUN DATA CHRG	\$ 12.00	\$ 12.51	\$ 29.19
52814000 CELLULAR PHONE SERVICES	\$ 312.00	\$ 325.26	\$ 758.94
52815000 EMAIL AND CALENDARING	\$ 245.00	\$ 255.41	\$ 595.96
52823000 AUTHENTIC & AUTHORIZ SVCS	\$ 142.00	\$ 148.04	\$ 345.42
52850000 PRINT BIND DUPLICATE	\$ 28.00	\$ 29.19	\$ 68.11
52913000 LIABILITY INSURANCE	\$ 44.00	\$ 45.87	\$ 107.03
52919000 OTHER INSURANCE	\$ 7.00	\$ 7.30	\$ 17.03
52920000 BONDING	\$ 7.00	\$ 7.30	\$ 17.03
52942000 OTHER EMP EDUCATIONAL EXP	\$ 3,023.00	\$ 3,151.48	\$ 7,353.45
52930000 REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 1,554.00	\$ 1,620.05	\$ 3,780.11
52 PURCHASED SERVICES	\$ 18,082.00	\$ 18,850.49	\$ 43,984.47
53110000 GENERAL OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$ 895.00	\$ 933.04	\$ 2,177.09
53110900 WORKSHOP/CONF-OFF SUPPLY	\$ 360.00	\$ 375.30	\$ 875.70
53 SUPPLIES	\$ 1,255.00	\$ 1,308.34	\$ 3,052.79
54511000 FURN-OFFICE	\$ 785.00	\$ 818.36	\$ 1,909.51
54521000 OFFICE EQUIPMENT	\$ 500.00	\$ 521.25	\$ 1,216.25
54534000 PC/PRINTER EQUIPMENT	\$ 6,488.00	\$ 6,763.74	\$ 15,782.06
54539000 OTHER EQUIPMENT	\$ 250.00	\$ 260.63	\$ 608.13
54713000 PC SOFTWARE	\$ 1,703.00	\$ 1,775.38	\$ 4,142.55
54 PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT	\$ 8,941.00	\$ 9,320.99	\$ 21,748.98
55830000 MEMBERSHIP DUES&SUBSCRIPT	\$ 909.00	\$ 947.63	\$ 2,211.14
55 OTHER EXPENSES & ADJUSTMENTS	\$ 909.00	\$ 947.63	\$ 2,211.14
TOTAL NON-SALARY ITEMS	\$ 29,187.00	\$ 30,427.45	\$ 70,997.38
EXPENDITURES	\$ 450,872.00	\$ 504,433.06	\$ 1,026,762.83



Closing Comments

We appreciate the support provided by senior management during FY26 and look forward to adding more value in FY27.

