



SALT LAKE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

LAW ENFORCEMENT & CRIMINAL JUSTICE INTERIM
A PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE SALT LAKE COUNTY JAIL

SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

CHAPTER 1

Audit Finding

Goal:

Improve Service Delivery

Finding:

The Salt Lake County Jail should use a public safety assessment when it needs to release individuals due to overcrowding. The use of this assessment can minimize violent and high-risk offenders being released back into the community.

Sheriff's Office Update:



No Overcrowding Releases Since June 1, 2025

The Salt Lake County Jail has not conducted an overcrowding release since June 1, 2025, following the County Council's approval to reopen Oxbow Jail's third pod, adding 184 beds, and ended the Utah State Hospital contract for the 22-bed Competency Restoration Unit (CRU), freeing up 64 beds for general jail use.



Releases

Individuals are now only released from the Salt Lake County Jail by a court order, by posting bail or bond, or through Salt Lake County's Criminal Justice Services Pretrial which is done under an agreement with the courts.



Remains an Option in Emergencies

Jails need a Capacity Management Plan to maintain safe and manageable population levels. While the goal is to avoid overcrowding releases, they remain a last-resort option if needed. Previously, overcrowding releases were positioned earlier in the protocol hierarchy, which meant they were used before other steps in the plan. The Sheriff's Office revised the plan to move overcrowding releases toward the end of the process, so they are now considered only after the preceding steps in the Capacity Management Plan have been implemented.



Recommendation Implemented - Overcrowding Release Eligibility Assessment

Previously, overcrowding release decisions considered only an individual's current charge. The Sheriff's Office developed a Release Eligibility Assessment Form to provide an objective review if overcrowding releases become necessary. The form establishes specific screening criteria for processing staff, and any individual who meets one or more disqualifying criteria is automatically ineligible for an overcrowding release.

CHAPTER 2

Audit Finding

Goal:

Improve Service Delivery

Finding:

The Salt Lake County Jail should revise its release policy to include prior instances of failing to appear in court in the release decision process.

Including a failure-to-appear element could inform the jail on who has regularly missed court dates so it can decide on whether to release the individual.

Sheriff's Office Update:



Implemented - Overcrowding Release Eligibility Assessment includes Failure-to-Appear

The Sheriff's Office implemented the portion of the recommendation within its control by adding failure-to-appear history to the new Release Eligibility Assessment Form. Failure to appear is now considered when evaluating an individual's eligibility for an overcrowding release, ensuring this history is part of the decision-making process if an overcrowding release becomes necessary.



Current System Limitation

Failure to appear information is not always available at the time of booking because only some warrants are specifically identified as "failure to appear."



System Improvements Underway

The Sheriff's Office is working with court partners and their Information Technology staff, who are coordinating with the Utah Department of Public Safety to implement system code changes that will allow failure to appear information to be more consistently reflected on issued warrants. The Sheriff's Office will continue working with its court partners until these enhancements are implemented.

CHAPTER 2

Audit Finding

Goal:
Improve Program Management

Finding:
Salt Lake County should revise their jail population forecast to account for changes by House Bill 312. This will assist the jail to better implement the legislation while the county considers larger action on jail capacity, which is addressed in Chapter 3.

Sheriff’s Office Update:



Recommendation Implemented - Updated Forecast to Include HB 312

Salt Lake County implemented this recommendation by engaging CGL in October 2025 to update the 2024 Master Plan. The updated analysis accounts for the impacts of HB 312, including restrictions on overcrowding releases and the resulting increase in average length of stay. CGL incorporated these changes into its revised jail population forecast and long-term capacity analysis.



Updated Population Projections

Based on the updated analysis, CGL determined Salt Lake County currently needs approximately 2,367 jail beds. The need is projected to increase to 2,685 by 2030 and 2,858 by 2035.

Current Capacity*	2025 Need	2030 Projection	2035 Projection	2040 Projection	2045 Projection	2050 Projection
2,639 beds (2,423 general housing, 216 specialty housing)	2,367 beds	2,685 beds	2,858 beds	2,987 beds	3,123 beds	3,183 beds

*Best practices recommend maintaining a 10% operational capacity buffer for population fluctuations, housing classifications, and operational needs. General housing beds can accommodate any inmate, while specialty beds are restricted to individuals who meet specific medical, protective custody, or behavior modification criteria.



Expanded Capacity Recommendations

The updated Master Plan increased the recommended net expansion from 348 new beds to 472 new beds.

CHAPTER 3

Audit Finding

Goal:
Improve Program Management

Finding:
Salt Lake County leaders should consider the options presented in this chapter. The first two options could be addressed by the county. The third option would require coordination with the Legislature.

Sheriff’s Office Update:



Advancing Long-Term Jail Capacity Planning

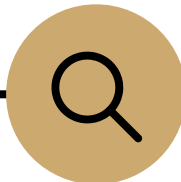
Salt Lake County continues to implement this recommendation by advancing long-term jail capacity planning. This work is guided by the updated CGL Master Plan, which incorporates population projections, the impacts of House Bill 312, and updated construction cost estimates.

Key Milestones:



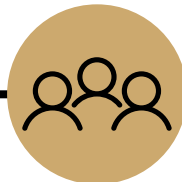
SLCO Council Resolution

Salt Lake County Council passed Resolution No. 6360, requesting the Debt Review Committee to review a proposed lease revenue bond issuance to support jail expansion.



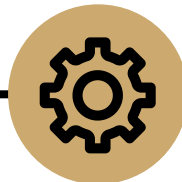
RFP Process

County initiated a competitive RFP process to select an architectural firm to conduct a feasibility study. The firm was selected on May 21, 2026.



Project Kickoff

The initial project meeting took place on June 29, 2026, followed by a kickoff meeting on July 6, 2026.



Ongoing Work

The firm will present the feasibility study to the County’s Debt Review Committee on September 23, 2026, followed by a presentation to the County Council on September 29, 2026.

Next Steps: The County Council will consider funding jail expansion during the 2027 budget process.

CHAPTER 3

Audit Finding

Goal:

Improve Program Management

Finding:

The sheriff, as the elected officer over the jail, should establish metrics and regularly analyze jail data in areas such as recidivism rates. This data can be presented to other county officials to help inform jail capacity needs.

Sheriff's Office Update:



Expanded Use of Data

The Sheriff's Office continues to implement this recommendation by expanding its use of data to inform decision-making and long-term jail capacity planning.



Regular Data Reviews

The Sheriff and Corrections Bureau leadership have established regular meetings to review jail population trends, booking volumes, rearrest rates, capacity pressures, and other key performance indicators. These reviews help monitor operations, identify emerging trends, and inform planning decisions.



More Frequent Reporting to County Council & Mayor

The Sheriff's Office is increasing formal jail data updates to the County Council and Mayor's Office from annually to quarterly, providing County leaders with more frequent information on jail population, trends, and capacity needs.



Dedicated Data Analyst

The Sheriff's Office is in the process of hiring a dedicated data analyst position. Once onboard, the data analyst will help develop standardized performance metrics.

CHAPTER 3

Audit Finding

Goal:

Improve Service Delivery

Finding:

The county mayor should coordinate with the sheriff to assess jail needs. This may require independently evaluating jail needs separate from public safety funding. This will better inform the mayor's budget jail needs and resources.

Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson

Mayor Wilson and her administration continue to implement this recommendation by advancing long-term jail capacity planning in partnership with the Sheriff's Office.

The County previously engaged CGL Companies to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the jail system, including existing facility conditions, operational needs, projected jail populations, deferred maintenance, and potential expansion options. CGL subsequently updated its analysis to account for the effects of House Bill 312, current population trends, and updated construction costs.

The County has now moved into the next phase of planning with Babcock Design, which recently began programming services for the Adult Detention Center expansion. This work will build on CGL's system level recommendations by developing more detailed space, scope, and cost information for policymakers.

Babcock will evaluate three planning scenarios: a full build-out based on CGL's population projections, an option focused on replacing the capacity currently provided by the Oxbow Jail along with additional space in the mental health unit, and a phased expansion that balances near-term needs with the County's longer-term capacity requirements. These scenarios will provide policymakers with clearer information regarding project scope, costs, tradeoffs, and potential funding strategies before final decisions are made.

The County expects this work to support future policy discussions and the Fall 2027 budget process.

CHAPTER 3

Audit Finding

Goal:

Improve Service Delivery

Finding:

The county council could provide forums for the independently elected officials, such as the sheriff, to collaborate on funding needs for the jail outside of the mayor's budget. This forum could provide a setting for the sheriff to share data and collaborate with policymakers on future jail planning.

Salt Lake County Council Chair Aimee Winder Newton

Since the issuance of Report No. 2025-30, the Salt Lake County Council has taken several steps responsive to the audit's recommendations. On March 3, 2026, the Council adopted Resolution No. 6360, requesting the Salt Lake County Debt Review Committee to conduct a comprehensive review of a proposed lease revenue bond issuance for the expansion of jail operations and capacity. The Debt Review Committee has provided preliminary analysis, and the Council intends to weigh the terms and timing of a proposed debt issuance in the coming months. Additionally, the Council has hosted multiple work sessions during the spring of 2026 providing forums for the Sheriff, the District Attorney, and other criminal justice stakeholders to present data, discuss funding needs, and collaborate with policymakers on jail planning outside of the annual budget process. These forums are and remain available to all independently elected officials on an ongoing basis.

Thank You!

SALT LAKE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
SHERIFF ROSIE RIVERA

