



# Cuyahoga County Agency of Inspector General



## SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

January 1, 2021 – June 30, 2021

**Mark D. Griffin**  
Inspector General



**CUYAHOGA COUNTY  
AGENCY OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

July 30, 2021

Dear Citizens of Cuyahoga County,

I am pleased to present to you the Cuyahoga County ("County") Agency of Inspector General's ("AIG") Semi-annual Report for the period January 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021.

During this difficult period of the COVID-19 crisis, the AIG significantly reduced its 2021 operating budget by 14.2% for the first half of 2021. The AIG also re-targeted its efforts and, among other things, the AIG:

- Increased its efforts with the County Treasurer's Office and the County Prosecutor's Office to collect unpaid taxes that precipitated payments of an additional \$620,620 in uncollected delinquent property taxes;
- Completed 24 investigations – an increase from the prior reporting period;
- Reviewed 87 Secondary Employment & Private Business Activity Disclosures;
- Issued 25 Ethics Opinions and Advisories;
- Continued to expand its preventative and proactive ethics education program;
- Reviewed 5 Nepotism/Conflict of Interest submissions;
- Registered 199 County contractors; and
- Continued to provide ethics training to every new County employee.

Since 2015, the AIG has identified **\$17,960,124** in recovered taxes, challenged costs and improper expenditures. I welcome your thoughts and comments on our past and on our future.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Mark D. Griffin".

Mark D. Griffin, Inspector General

## ***Inspector General Mark D. Griffin***



Mark D. Griffin ("Mr. Griffin") serves as Cuyahoga County's ("County") second Inspector General ("IG"). Mr. Griffin was appointed as IG by County Executive Armond Budish and was unanimously confirmed by County Council. Mr. Griffin was originally appointed on April 28, 2015 to fill an unexpired term ending June 30, 2016 and has been unanimously re-appointed twice. In his role as IG, Mr. Griffin is responsible for investigating waste, fraud and abuse in the County, which has approximately five thousand (5,000) employees and a one point three billion (\$1.3 billion) dollar annual budget.

Prior to becoming IG, Mr. Griffin represented whistleblowers in matters before federal court and state court involving the United States ("U.S.") Department of Labor, the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. He practiced law for more than twenty (20) years with a substantial part of his law practice including the investigation of dishonest and fraudulent conduct. Mr. Griffin litigated cases under the False Claims Act involving allegations that certain defendants defrauded the United States. He has also represented U.S. Treasury agents who investigated money-laundering and financial fraud allegations; as well as whistleblowers who revealed fraudulent practices in major hospital chains, assisted living facilities and pharmacies.

Mr. Griffin's law practice included several significant cases which involved complicated financial investigations. The Cellnet Case involved discriminatory pricing of cellular telecommunications services and resulted in, among other things, a twenty-two (\$22,000,000) million-dollar settlement for his client – considered by the Judge to be one of the largest single-plaintiff settlements in County history. Separately, the Penn Central Case lasted over 40 (forty) years and resulted in a fourteen point eight (\$14.8) million-dollar settlement for thirty-two (32) former employees. Both of these cases required investigations into payment practices of contractors or employees. Mr. Griffin's cases also include a one point seven (\$1.7) million-dollar fraud judgment against an associate of the Scarfo crime family.

Mr. Griffin earned his Masters' Degree in Public Policy from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He graduated at the top of his class from Case Western Reserve University School of Law and received his Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Political Science from the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Griffin's background includes working as an Intern for a Conservative member of British Parliament and serving two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Cameroon, West Africa building schools, supporting small economic development projects and promoting community development.

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## Executive Summary

During the first half of 2021, the Agency of Inspector General ("AIG") continued to change and adapt its policies and practices as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has also changed and adapted in order to serve its public obligations. As a result of COVID-19, the AIG changed its strategies and work plans. The AIG found new ways to be successful, but also had to re-arrange its priorities and delay some of its other pre-existing goals.

In 2021, the AIG:

- **Cut Budget by 14.2%.** In response to the COVID pandemic, the AIG continued to reduce expenditures and left unfilled one full-time equivalent deputy inspector position, eliminated travel and reduced training opportunities.
- **Completed Investigations - 24 cases.** Typically, the AIG completes 23 investigations during a six-month period. During the first six months of 2021, the AIG completed 24 investigations. This represents an increase over the prior reporting period, and a small increase above the AIG's average for case closures. Staff was able to maintain our average case closure rate while continuing to work efficiently from home without interruptions from daily events.
- **AIG Recovered Taxes - \$620,620.46.** During an average six-month period, the AIG -- in cooperation with the offices of Prosecutor O'Malley and Treasurer Murray -- will help recover \$10,000 to \$111,000 in taxes owed by commercial entities. In the first half of 2021, the AIG facilitated \$620,620.46. This builds upon the outstanding work of Mike Kenney, Mike Sweeney and their staff in the Fishbowl Project with which the AIG plays a small, but useful, role.

Since 2015, the AIG has identified **\$17,960,124** in recovered taxes, challenged costs and improper expenditures.

The AIG also continued to monitor and follow-up on previous investigations and reviews including:

- Reviewed 87 Secondary Employment & Private Business Activity Disclosures.
- Reviewed 5 Nepotism/Conflict of Interest submissions.
- Registered 199 contractor applications.
- Issued 25 Ethics Opinions and Advisories.
- Opened 27 Debarments.

**Goals – Past and Present**  
**Goals Past: Comparing Actual Performance to**  
**Goals Originally Set for the First Half of 2021**

In its prior semi-annual report, the AIG set forth specific goals relating to the mission of the agency. Although the COVID-19 crisis required significant changes, most of these goals were achieved. As discussed below, these goals were as follows:

- 1) **Expand On-Line Education Outreach.** Achieved. The AIG created and delivered a revised ethics training presentation with interactive tests.
- 2) **Expand Tax Facilitation Efforts.** Achieved. The AIG expanded its cooperation with the County Treasurer and County Prosecutor's Office and precipitated an additional \$620,620 in tax collections.
- 3) **Review and Update Preventative Documents.** Achieved. The AIG worked with the Ohio Ethics Commission and the Citizens' League of Cleveland to review, revise and update documents and create presentations that explain the County Ethics Code and assist in fraud prevention.
- 4) **Expand Potential Debarment & Contractor Reviews.** Achieved. The AIG completed 14 debarments and initiated 27 new debarment cases.
- 5) **Assist Law Enforcement.** Achieved. The AIG continued to work with local law enforcement with respect to on-going public corruption investigations and scheduled trial(s). The AIG expects to provide testimony on behalf of, and in support of, the State of Ohio in at least two pending criminal matters.

In light of the current situation, and with reduced staffing for the second half of 2021, the AIG intends to achieve the following goals:

- 1) **Establish an employee tip reporting hotline in cooperation with the County Sheriff.** The AIG will work with the County Sheriff to create a confidential tip hotline to report complaints and facilitate improvements regarding the County Jail.
- 2) **Cooperate with Local Law Enforcement in Public Corruption Trials.** The AIG will prepare for and provide testimony as appropriate in public corruption trials currently scheduled for the second half of 2021.

- 3) **Fill Open Positions Within the AIG.** As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the AIG has several important employment positions that need to be filled during the second half of 2021.



# SECTION 1: ADMINISTRATION<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 AGENCY OF INSPECTOR GENERAL STRUCTURE

## 1.2 AGENCY OF INSPECTOR GENERAL BUDGET



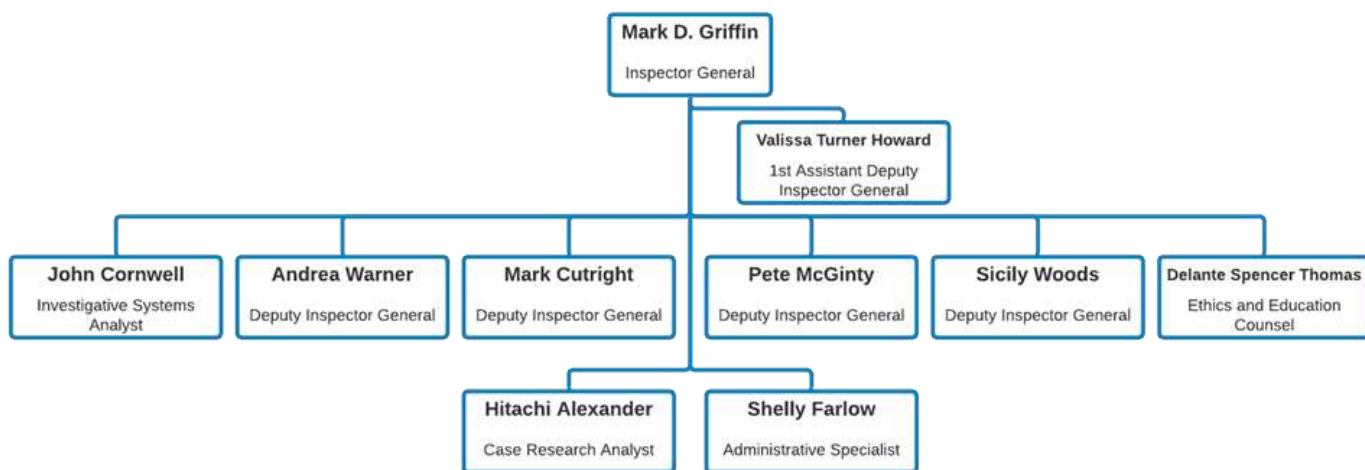
*As a result of the COVID 19 emergency, the  
AIG made budgetary adjustments that  
resulted in a 14.2% budget reduction in 2021*

<sup>1</sup> For additional information regarding the background and jurisdiction of the Agency of Inspector General, please see Appendix 1.



## Section 1.1 – Agency of Inspector General Structure

During the first half of 2021, the AIG operated under the following organizational structure:



## Agency of Inspector General Staff Qualifications

The AIG hires highly qualified individuals who not only reflect the diversity of the community, but also have the necessary level of skills, abilities, and experience for their respective roles. Staff members bring an array of experiences from state, county, and federal government.



Staff members have backgrounds in and/or academic degrees in:

- Accounting
- Auditing
- Ethics & Compliance
- Fraud Examinations
- Labor Relations & Human Resources
- Crisis Communications Management
- Statistics and Analytics
- Investigations
- Law
- Law Enforcement
- Public Policy Management
- Public Relations
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Business Administration

The various certifications and licensures held by staff members include:

- Certified Inspector General
- Certified Inspector General Investigator
- Two (2) Members Certified Leading Professionals in Ethics & Compliance
- Certified Inspector General Auditor
- Certified Identity and Security Technologist
- Two (2) Certified Fraud Examiners
- Two (2) Members of the Ohio Bar
- One (1) Member of the California Bar
- Certified Ethics Associate in Information Technology
- Certified Data Privacy Solutions Engineer

## Office Development: 2021 Training Focused on Current Fraud Related Topics



As part of its mission to target financial waste, fraud, and abuse, AIG staff members attended trainings on a variety of topics to enhance their skills. For instance, in this reporting period, the Inspector General, First Assistant Deputy Inspector General, along with five Deputy Inspectors General attended and participated in webinars and trainings including the following courses:

- Data Privacy Relating to Data Governance, Architecture and Lifecycle
- Criminal Justice in the Cloud
- ACFE Ethics
- How to use the dark web for your investigations
- Whistleblowing, Defending the Accuser and the Accused
- Year of Uncertainty Spurs a Year of Integrated Risk Management
- Pandemic-Related Fraud in Government Agencies
- Crisis Management: Fraud & Law Series
- Global Privacy Regulations: Hot Spot to Watch in 2021
- Crisis Management: Fraud & Law Series
- Advance Digital Investigations: Legacy Modernization
- Upgrade to Citizen-Centric Digital Services
- Fraud Bio Training
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Anti-Fraud Field

To deliver on its responsibilities, the AIG continued its focus on building a team that has the collective capacity to perform across various skill sets including investigation, compliance evaluation, and technical support. Incorporating additional disciplines provides the Agency the capability to fully address the intended duties and responsibilities outlined in the County Code.

The AIG places special emphasis on maintaining the highest level of professionalism. The AIG invests in its most valued asset: its staff. The Agency continues to provide in-house training to all staff members on topics including the mission, function, and authority of the AIG, the County Code, and proper investigative techniques and

protocols. Additionally, the AIG provides resources for continuing education to further develop, cross-train, and add new skills to its staff of professionals.

The AIG maintained membership in the Association of Inspectors General, a national organization of state, local and federal inspectors general and their staff during this reporting period. The Association of Inspectors General offers training seminars and certification institutes for members as well as networking opportunities. The AIG also maintains its membership in the Council on Government Ethics Law, the preeminent organization of government ethics administrators.

## Section 1.2 – Agency of Inspector General Budget

The County Executive and County Council granted the AIG a total budget of \$1,098,411 for 2021. The following is a summary of the AIG's actual budget performance through June 30, 2021:

	\$1,025,709	\$438,053	\$587,656
	\$67,352	\$22,381	\$44,971
	\$0	\$4,106	(\$4,106)
	\$5,350	\$6,677	(\$1,327)
	\$1,098,411	\$471,217	\$627,194

As part of its mandate to create and maintain contractor and lobbyist registries, the AIG is required to collect a one hundred-dollar (\$100.00) registration fee from all non-exempt contractors and lobbyists. All fees collected from contractors fund the AIG vendor registration account. In the last biennial budget, this fund was allocated to offset reductions from the General Fund. The AIG supports the salary of a part-time staff member from the vendor registration account, as well as the current salaries of other staff to the extent that they perform services related to contractor registrations, background checks and investigations. Finally, all bank fees associated with the online vendor registration process are paid from the vendor registration account. The AIG expects to utilize funds from the vendor registration account to continue support staff costs as well as its current case management tracking system.

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<sup>2</sup> Totals as of June 30, 2021.

Based on the County's population of 1,235,072, the cost to operate the AIG in 2021 will amount to less than \$.89 per citizen per year. This does not take into account the value added by our services, which includes issuing ethical guidance to employees and elected officials, completing contractor registrations, investigating allegations of ethical misconduct or County costs/expenditures challenged by the AIG.<sup>3</sup>

**89¢<sup>4</sup>**

The average person spends more than 3x that amount on just one gallon of gasoline.



<sup>3</sup> The AIG challenges costs/expenditures that are determined to be improper, unnecessary, unreasonable or lacking proper documentation.

<sup>4</sup> According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the average cost of a gallon of regular gasoline was approximately \$3.15 in June 2021. [https://www.eia.gov/totalenergy/data/monthly/pdf/sec9\\_6.pdf](https://www.eia.gov/totalenergy/data/monthly/pdf/sec9_6.pdf)

# SECTION 2: INVESTIGATIONS

## 2.1 INVESTIGATION STATISTICS

## 2.2 COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS



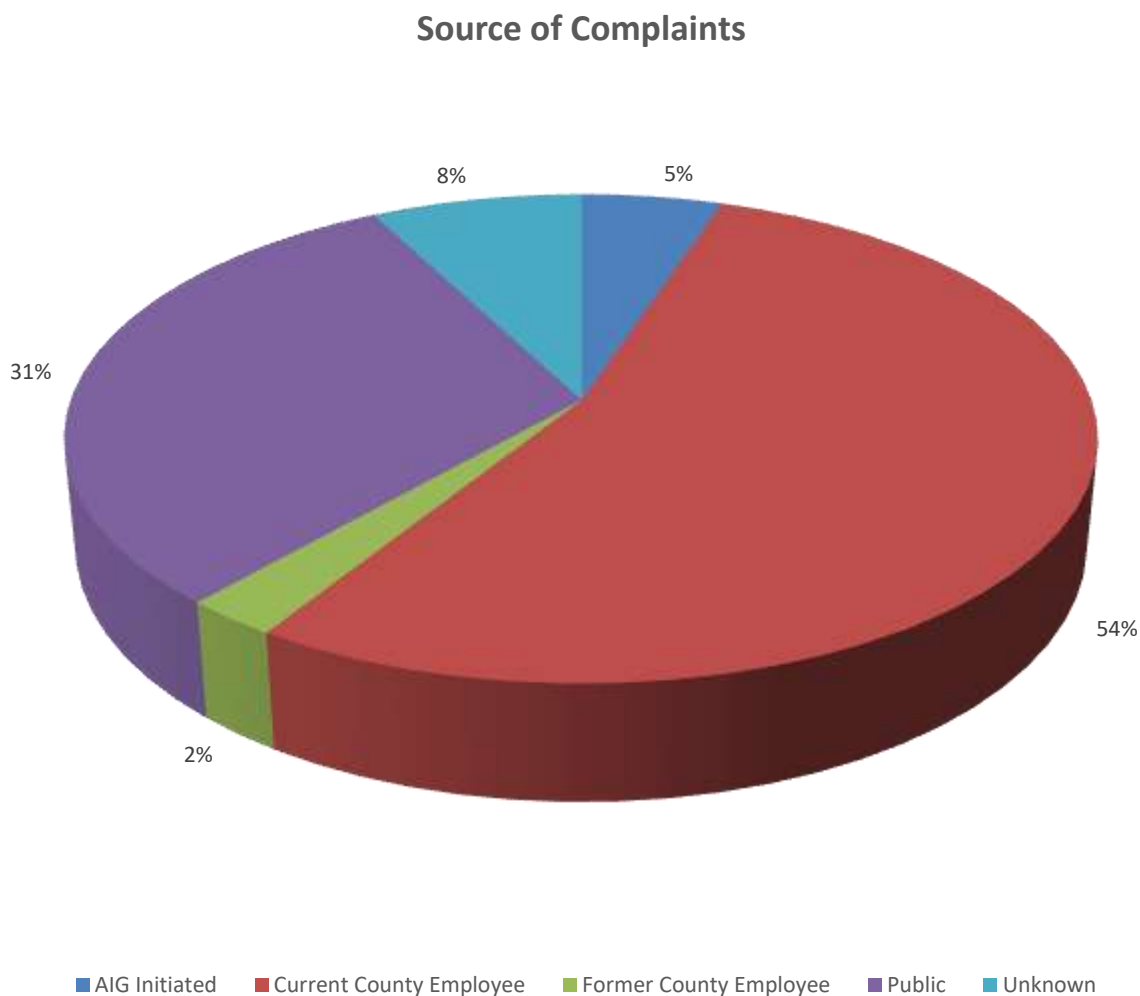
*The AIG collaborated with Federal, State and County authorities regarding continuing public corruption investigations.*



## Section 2.1 – Investigation Statistics

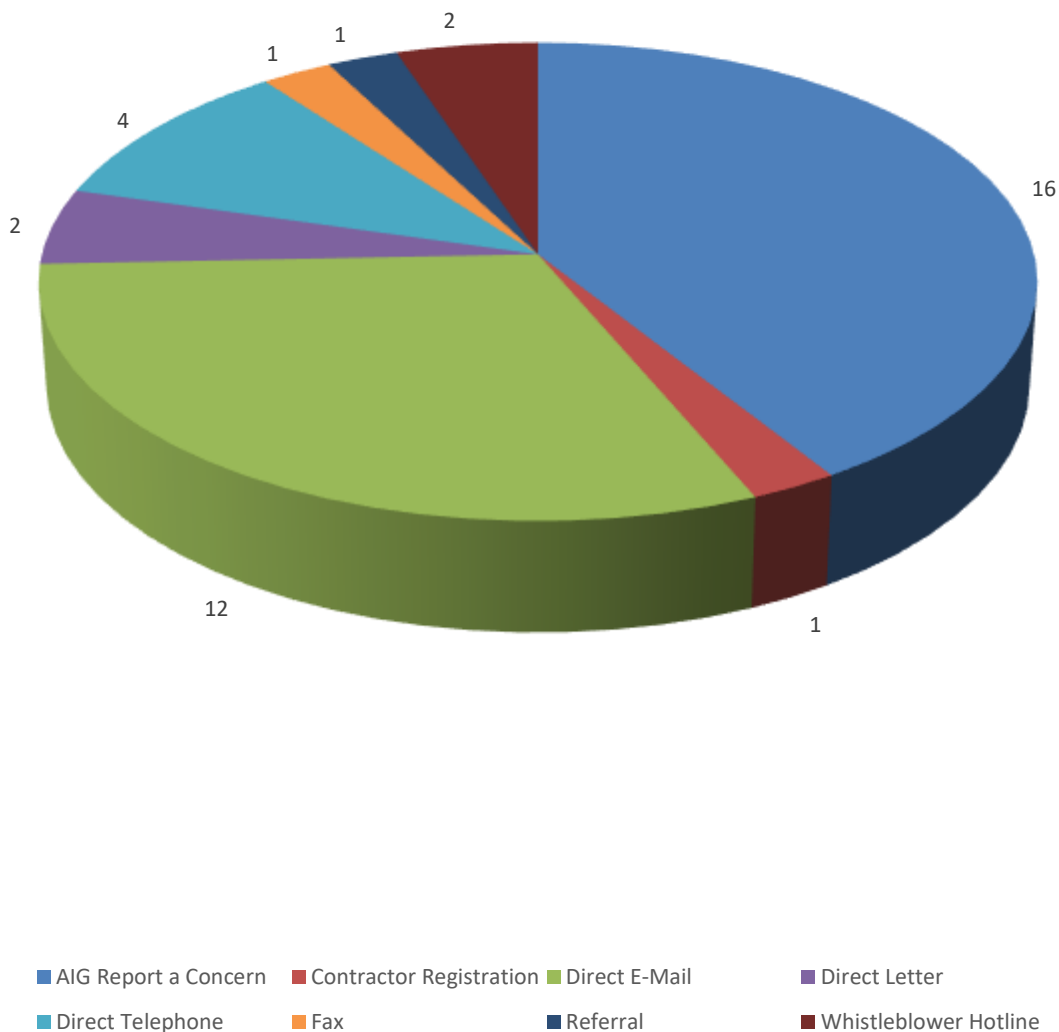
### A. *Whistleblower Complaints/Referrals*

The AIG received thirty-nine (39) unique whistleblower complaints or referrals from January 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021. The following is a summary of the source of the complaints or referrals:



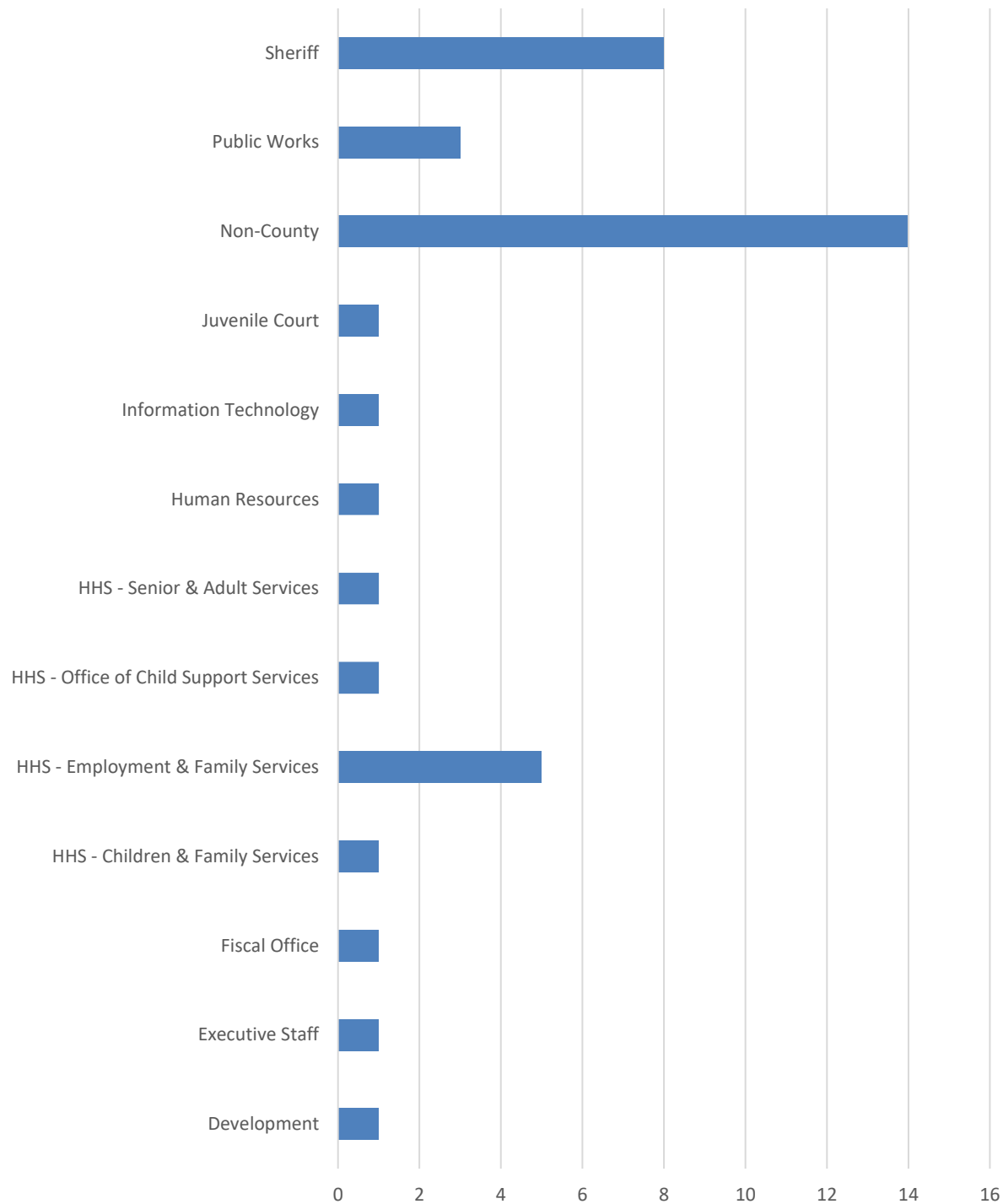
During this reporting cycle, the greatest number of complaints were submitted by current County employees, followed by complaints from members of the public.

### Method of Receipt of Complaints



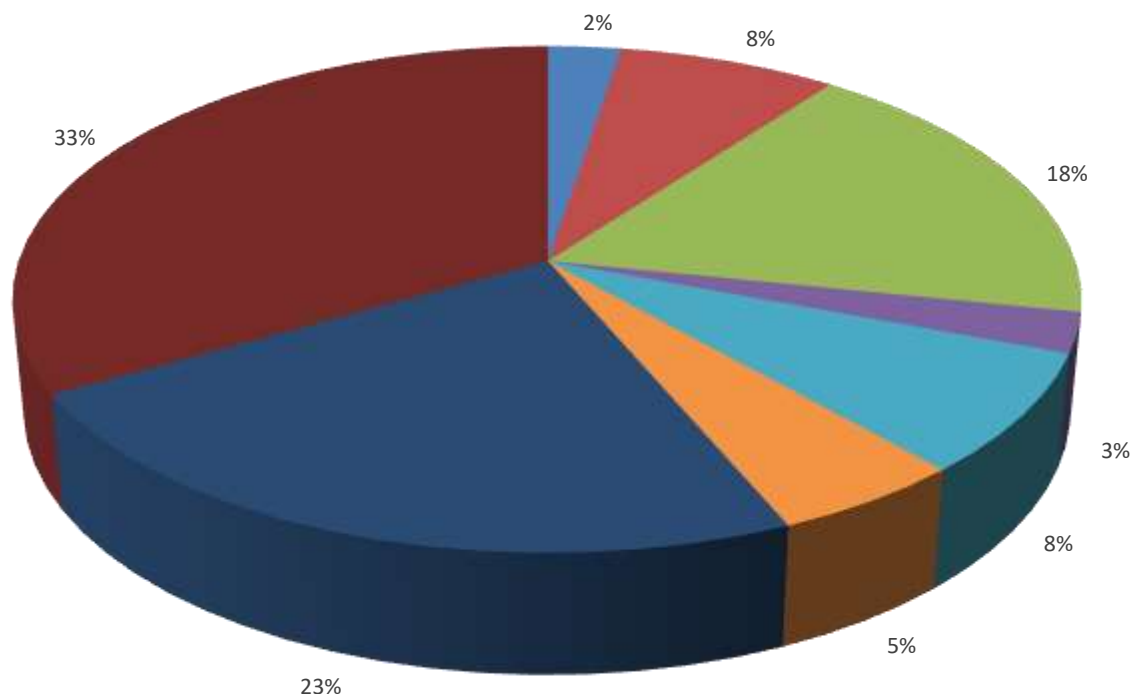
The AIG's ability to be effective is directly linked to its accessibility. During this reporting period, the most utilized method for submitting complaints to the AIG was via the AIG Report a Concern. Direct E-mail was the second most utilized method for submitting complaints during this reporting period.

### Complaints by Department



The greatest number of complaints were in the Non-County category. The second highest volume of complaints received were regarding the Sheriff's Department.

### Complaint Disposition



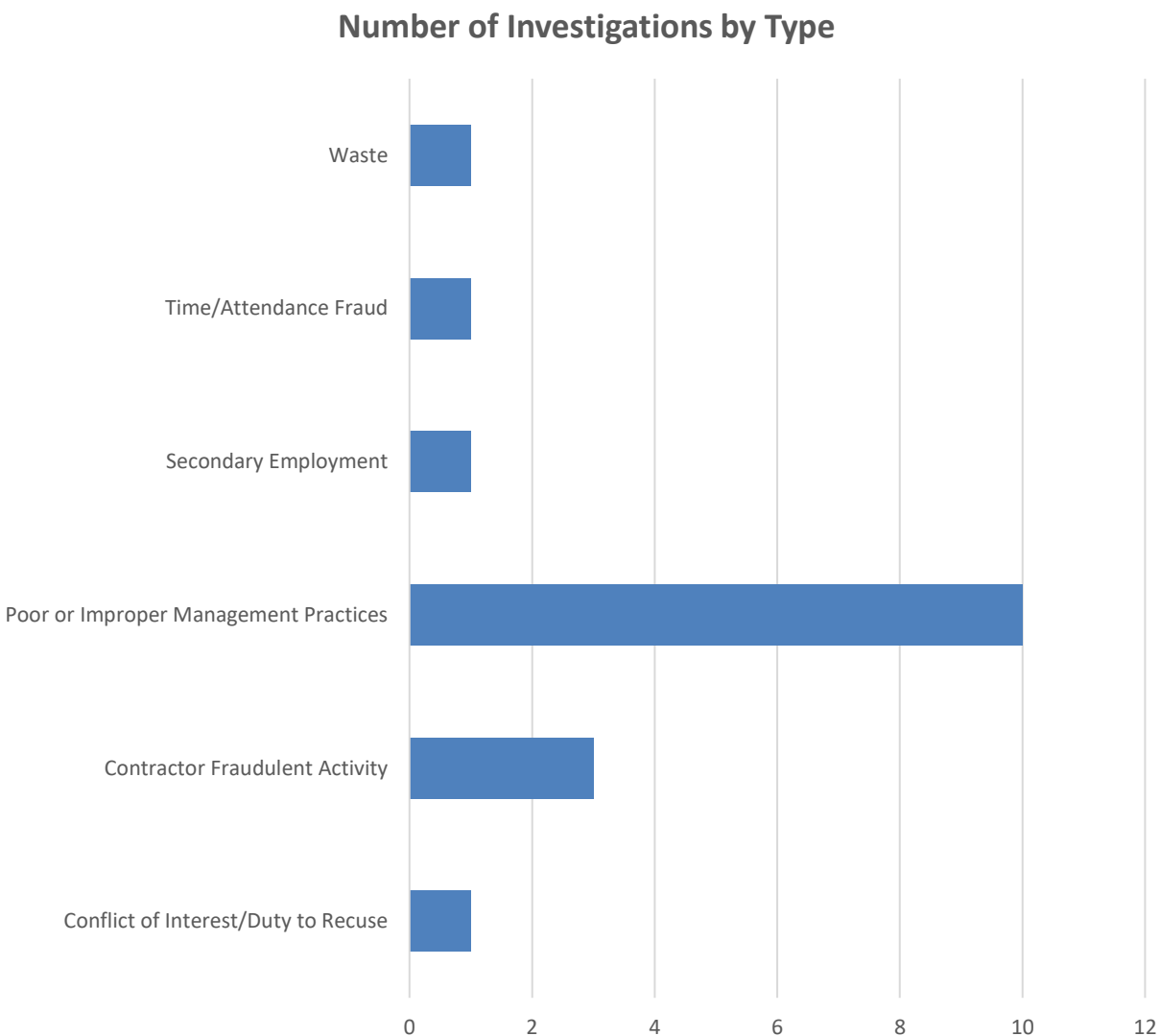
- Decline Investigation - Lack of Information
- Decline Investigation - Lack of Jurisdiction (No Referral)
- Decline Investigation - Lack of Jurisdiction (Non-County Referral)
- Decline Investigation - Management Inquiry Received
- Decline Investigation - Management Referral
- Decline Investigation - Other
- Investigation Initiated
- Open

The AIG's policy is that most human resource complaints should be addressed by line-management and the County Department of Human Resources. The AIG is committed to supporting – rather than reducing – the authority of line-supervisors to manage their departments.

## B. Investigations

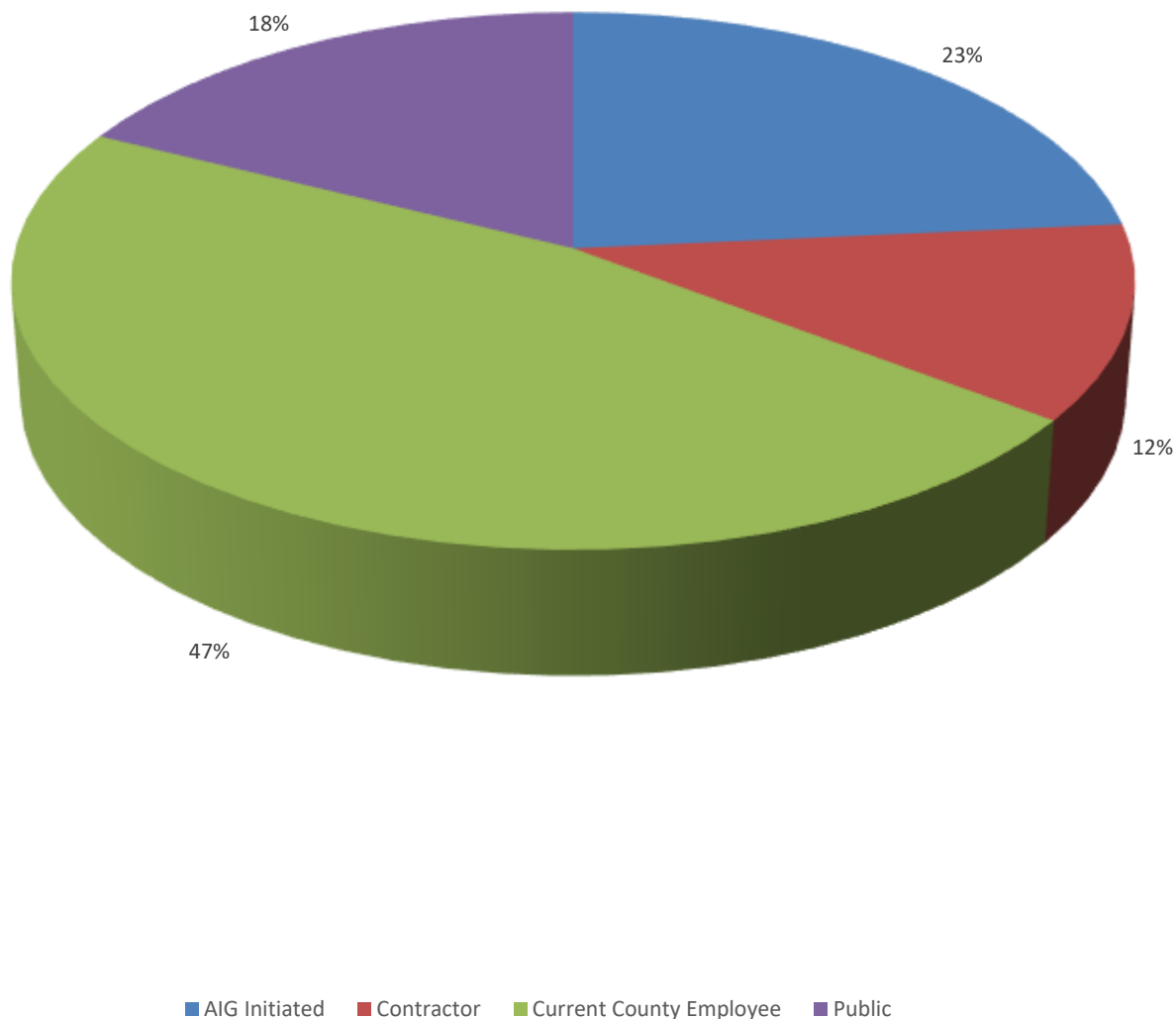
The AIG initiated seventeen (17) investigations and reviews during this reporting period.

The following is a summary of the nature of the seventeen (17) newly initiated investigations and reviews during this reporting period:



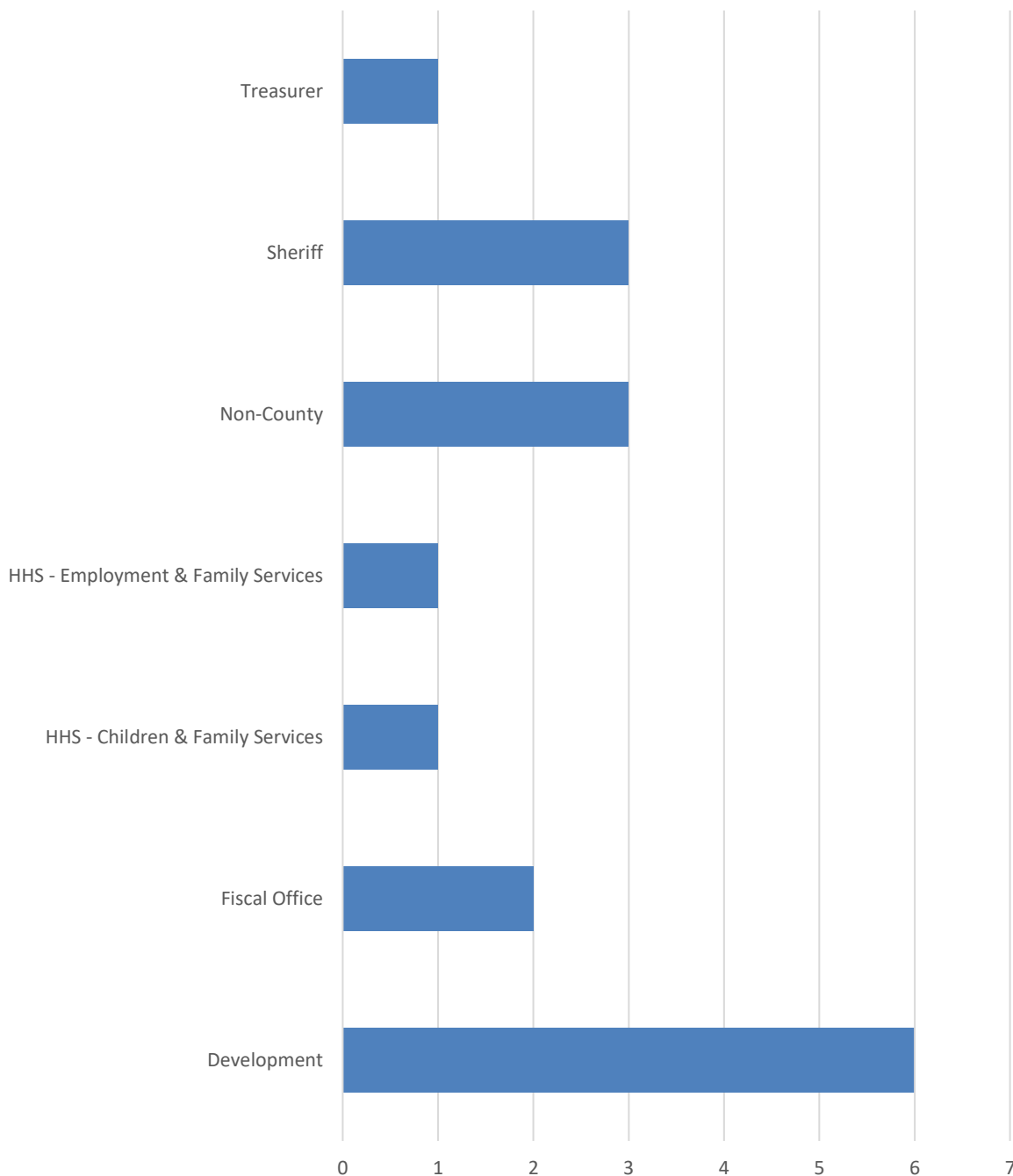
The AIG investigated a wide range of complaints during this reporting period, with Poor or Improper Management Practices accounting for the highest number of complaints investigated, followed by Contractor Fraudulent Activity.

### Source of Investigations



Consistent with prior reports, investigations generated through current County employees accounted for the largest source of newly initiated investigations and reviews during the reporting period. AIG initiated investigations were the next largest source.

### Investigations Initiated by Department



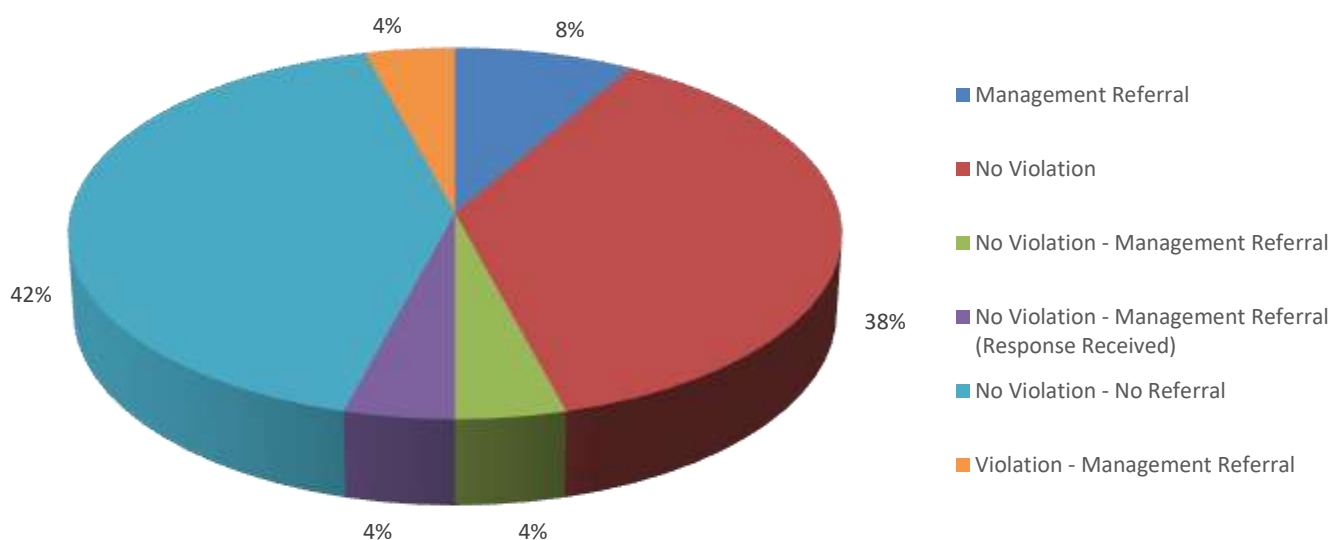
During this reporting period, the highest number of newly initiated investigations were in connection with the Department of Development, the Sheriff's Department and Non-County.



## Section 2.2 – Completed Investigations

During this reporting period, the AIG issued findings on and completed twenty-four (24) investigations.

### Disposition of Closed Investigations



### Challenged Costs/Expenditures

Finally, the AIG has identified **\$7,334,321** in challenged costs/expenditures since its inception and more recently identified **\$7,135,644** challenged costs/expenditures since 2015.

## **Representative Examples of Recent Investigations & Reviews**

### **Delinquent Property Tax Initiative - \$620,620 during First Half 2021**

In September 2018, the AIG met with the County Treasurer, Chris Murray, and agreed to assist with the collection of delinquent property taxes.

AIG staff worked with the Treasurer's Office and the County Prosecutor's Tax Foreclosure Division ("Foreclosure") to jointly develop a process to identify and verify parcels that are truly delinquent. The AIG sends a warning letter to the taxpayer notifying them that their County property taxes are delinquent and advises the taxpayer to address the delinquent tax issue. If the taxpayer has not contacted the AIG and the taxes are still delinquent after 30 days, the AIG begins the process of debarring the taxpayer.

During the first half of 2021, the AIG's review of delinquent parcels resulted in collection of \$620,620. Since 2018, the AIG's efforts have resulted in collection of \$8,199,611 of the delinquent property taxes reviewed. The AIG expects that this amount will increase in the future as the program develops.

### **Misuse of County Resources**

The AIG received a complaint alleging that a Department of Senior Adult Services ("DSAS") employee was assigned a County owned laptop computer that she failed to return and is now using for personal business. The employee allegedly told a co-worker that she had no intention of returning the laptop computer to the County because "the laptop is now hers."

The employee told investigators that a former IT employee told her to keep the laptop for her personal use because the County was replacing them with newer models and the old laptop would be thrown away. The Dell laptop was returned to the AIG on June 17, 2021. This matter was referred to County Executive Armond Budish, Chief Human Resource Officer Jesse Drucker, and CJFS Administrator David Merriman for consideration of action commensurate with the violations.

### **Review of AIG Registration Status- Covid-19 Emergency Purchases**

On March 11, 2020, County Executive Budish signed an emergency declaration in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The declaration permitted changes to the

County procurement process in order to speed it up so that supplies needed to help keep residents safe could be quickly purchased.

These changes were facilitated by one of the AIG's registration exemptions, which was approved by the Board of Control in 2018 in order to speed up emergency contracting during times of crisis.

Contractors supplying products or services relating to purchases made pursuant to Section 501.03(A) of the County Code ("Emergency and Unforeseen Time Sensitive Mission Critical Purchases") or Section 501.08(A) of the County Code ("County Executive Emergency Authority") are not required to pre-register with the AIG.

As part of the exemption granted by the Board of Control: County Code Section 501.08(A) provides limited authority to make purchases without securing the usual preapprovals. This authority is restricted to emergency or unforeseen time sensitive mission critical purchases. Because the purchases made under these provisions will be made on an immediate and unplanned basis, it is impractical to require vendor registration and training prior to the purchase. Whenever this exemption is granted, the requesting department shall notify the Inspector General and the contractor shall complete the registration process within thirty (30) days of contracting with the County. Contractors failing to register within 30 days could be debarred from any future contracts, found to be in breach of contract and/or have any unpaid funds withheld.

During the COVID-19 emergency, AIG staff continuously monitored the list of Emergency Purchases posted on OPD's website and worked with County departments to ensure that all contractors awarded contracts that exceeded \$10,000 in a calendar year complied with the terms of the AIG registration requirement within 30 days of the contract date.

# SECTION 3: ETHICS COMPLIANCE<sup>5</sup>

## 3.1 Ethics Advisory Opinions

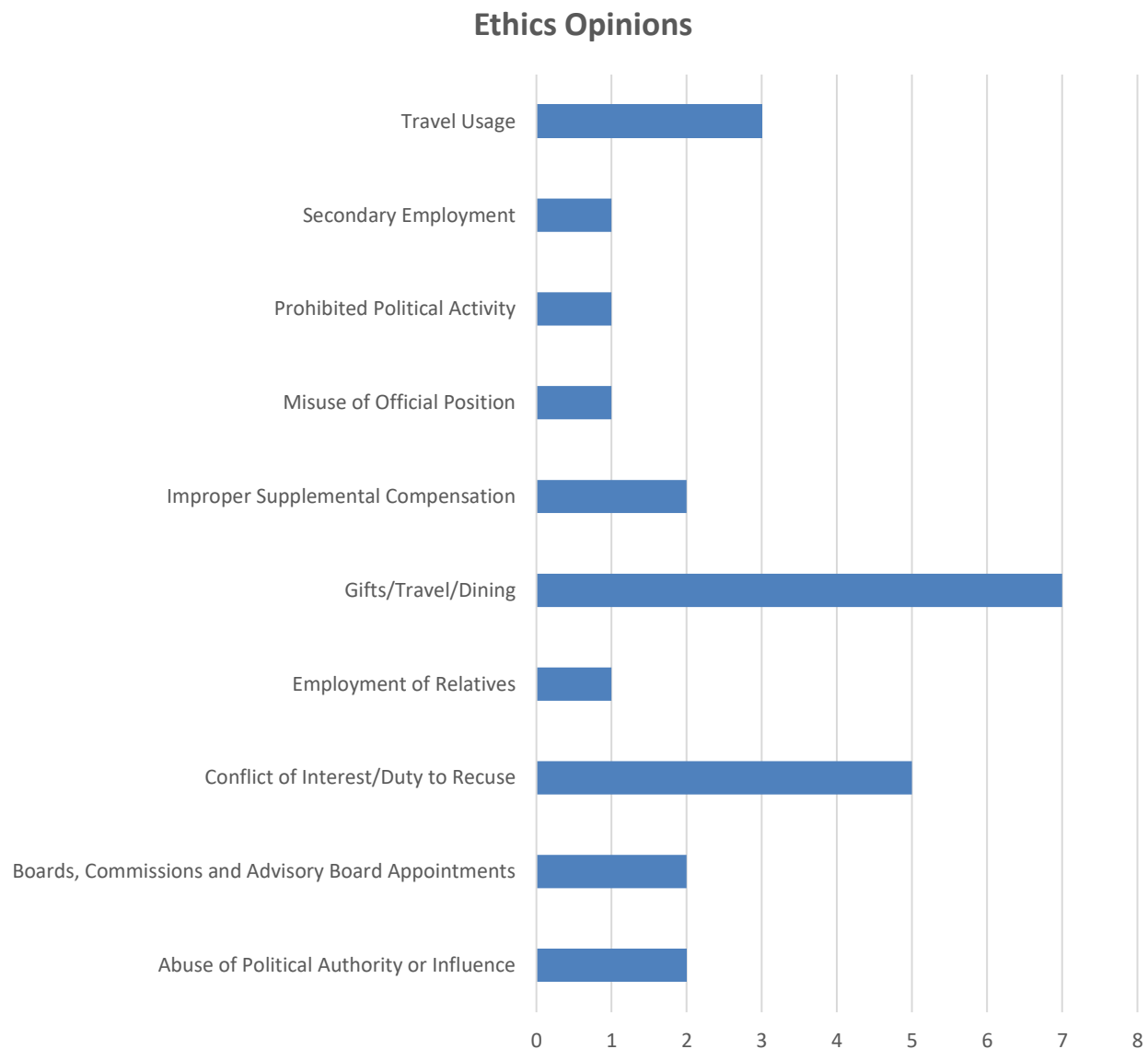
## 3.2 Ethics Disclosures



<sup>5</sup> For additional discussion regarding Ethics and Compliance please see Appendix 3.

## Section 3.1 – Ethics Advisory Opinions

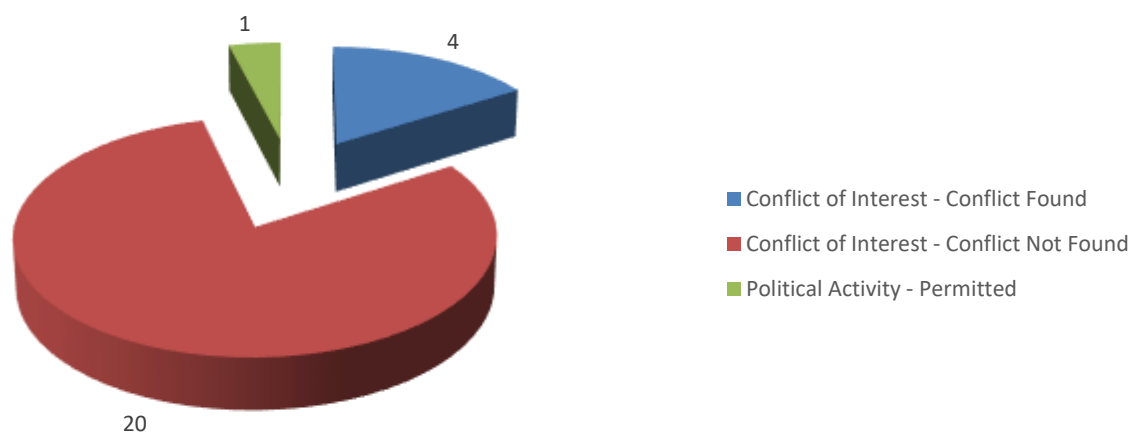
The AIG reviewed twenty-five (25) requests for ethics advisory opinions during this reporting period and issued Ethics Advisory Opinions regarding the following topics:



During the first half of 2021, ethics advisory opinion topics included, but were not limited to: (1) Gifts/Travel/Dining; (2) Conflicts of Interest; (3) Travel Usage; (4) Boards, Commissions and Advisory Board Appointments; (5) Abuse of Political Authority or Influence; and (6) Improper Supplemental Compensation.

Of the twenty-five (25) ethics opinions requested during the last six months, the AIG determined in four (4) cases that there were conflicts of interest.

### Ethics Advisory Opinion Disposition



## Representative Examples of Recent Ethics Advisory Opinions

### Misuse of Official Position

(21-0021-EI) Inquiry from a County director for general guidance on how to handle requests to give "testimonial statements" for people and/or organizations, some nonprofit and some for profit, with whom she has worked. In this case, someone she has worked with is starting a consulting business and wants to put a statement from her in her professional capacity on his website. The AIG advised that it is not permissible to be used as a public endorser, or to receive any remuneration. Additionally, as to the nature of the reference, it will not violate the County Ethics Code if: 1) it is truthful; 2) based on personal experience; 3) not given as a public endorsement for a private concern; 4) is not provided on a discriminatory or political basis; and 5) the recommender does not receive anything of value.

## **Nepotism**

(21-0028-EI) Inquiry from an employee regarding whether the County Ethics Code prohibits him from hiring his cousin's daughter. As defined by the Code, a "relative" includes an individual's spouse, domestic partner, parent, grandparent, step-parent, sibling, step-sibling, sibling's spouse, child, grandchild, step-child, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, first cousin, or household member, and persons having any of these relationships to the spouse or domestic partner of said individual. The AIG advised that the County Ethics Code does not extend to second cousins and therefore does not prohibit the hiring of the employee's cousin's daughter.

## **Gifts/Travel/Dining**

(21-0004-EI) Inquiry as to whether an offer from the Cleveland Cavaliers for purchase of discounted tickets was acceptable to circulate to County employees. The AIG advised that the proposed discount was acceptable assuming that it was made available to a large number of other non-county persons and was not being offered in exchange for any benefit. However, the use of County networks for private sales/advertising would not be permitted on a subjective basis or one that permitted some private actors, but not others, to use County resources for subjective reasons.

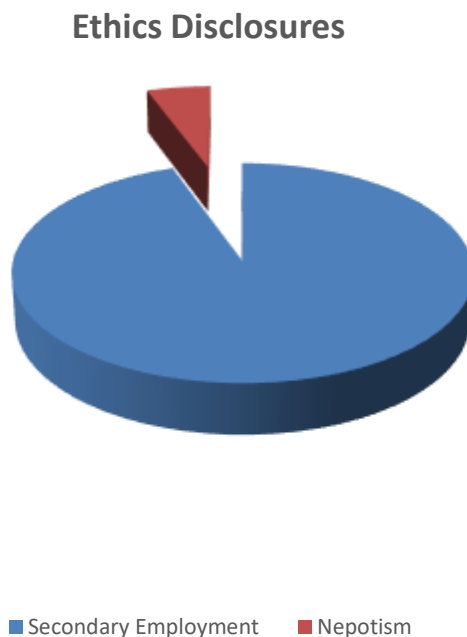
## **Improper Supplemental Compensation**

(21-0022-EI) Inquiry from an employee regarding whether she could accept sponsored tickets to an event. The invitation indicated that the employee was being offered the tickets because of her role in Cuyahoga County. Accordingly, the AIG advised that the County Ethics Code prohibits an employee from accepting gifts (of any value) from an outside source that are intended as a reward for being a County employee or for performing any official action on the part of the employee.



## Section 3.2 – Ethics Disclosures

The AIG reviewed eighty-seven (87) inquiries regarding secondary employment and five (5) Nepotism/Conflict of Interest disclosures during this reporting cycle.



## Nepotism & Conflict of Interest Disclosures

The County Code prohibits elected officials, employees, and board members from participating in decisions specifically to appoint, hire, promote, discipline, or discharge a relative for any position of the County. Elected officials, employees, and board members are not permitted to supervise a relative in the performance of the relative's official power and duties. In addition, no public official, employee, or board member shall secure any public contract in which the individual, a member of the individual's family, or any of the individual's business associates has an interest in violation of RC 2921.42.

All employees are required to disclose relatives, all private business interests and associates involved with any matter before the County to the AIG. The AIG reviewed five (5) Nepotism/Conflict of Interest disclosures this reporting cycle for potential conflicts.

## Secondary Employment & Private Business Activity Disclosures

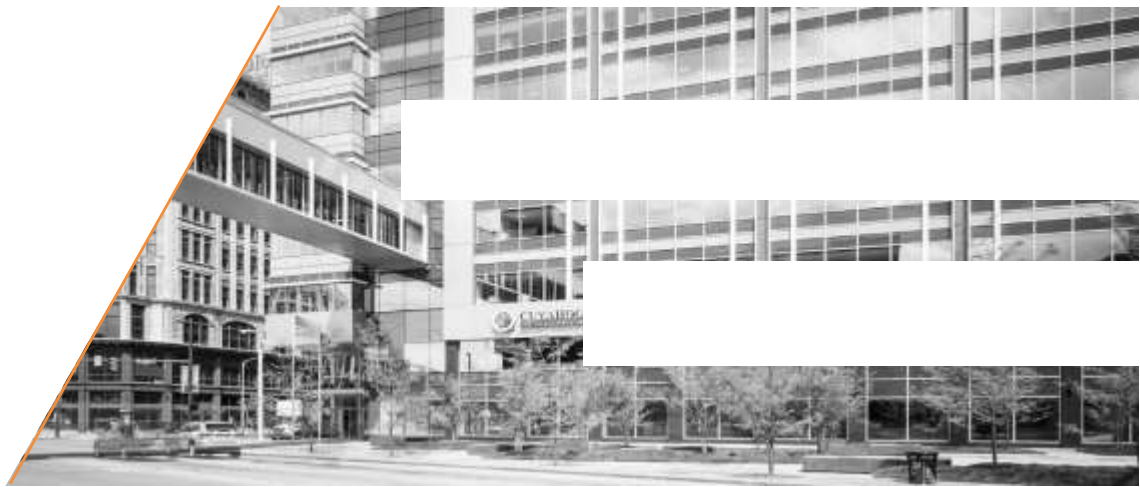
The County Code requires that all elected officials and employees disclose certain secondary employment in writing, on an official form approved by the Inspector General, to the County Department of Human Resources and that department must transmit the forms to the AIG. The AIG processed eighty-seven (87) Secondary Employment & Private Business Activity Disclosures this reporting cycle.

The AIG responds to each secondary employment disclosure by providing a response as to whether any provision of Title 4 of the County Code would prohibit the employee from engaging in the secondary employment. Secondary employment is generally permissible so long as the following conditions are met:

- Cannot use County time, resources, personnel or facilities;
- Cannot use an official title or identification in soliciting private outside employment or conducting private business activity;
- Cannot use the authority or influence of a County position to secure a public contract that benefits themselves, a family member or a business associate;
- Cannot have an interest in the profits or benefits of a public contract entered into by or for the use of the political subdivision or governmental agency or instrumentality with which the employee is connected;
- Cannot use relationships with other elected officials and employees established while performing official County duties to secure a favorable decision or action by that official or employee regarding the employee's private interests;
- Cannot participate in any official County capacity in a matter upon which the employee's private interests are dependent or contingent;
- Cannot receive fees for providing services rendered on projects that the employee has recommended in the employee's official capacity;
- Cannot participate in decisions or make recommendations regarding competitors to the employee's private business interest; and
- Cannot disclose or use confidential information obtained in the course of performing County duties.

# SECTION 4: CONTRACTORS & LOBBYISTS<sup>6</sup>

- 4.1 Registration for Contractors and Lobbyists
- 4.2 Contractor Background Checks Increased Tax Collections
- 4.3 Debarment Procedures



*To date, the AIG has been able to identify \$2,638,679.42 in unpaid taxes owed by County contractors.*

<sup>6</sup> For further information regarding ethics training and registration, please see Appendix 4.

## Section 4.1 – Registration and Background Checks for Contractors and Lobbyists

As of June 30, 2021, there were one thousand, seven hundred twenty-seven (1,727) contractors and seventeen (17) lobbyists registered with the AIG.

The contractor and lobbyist registration program continues to be the largest disclosure project undertaken by the AIG.

After recent updates to the Ethics Code, which changed the registration requirements, many County Contractors who were previously registered with the AIG were not required to renew their expiring registrations.

Approximately three hundred thirty-three (333) registrations will expire on December 31, 2021. The online process was – and will continue to be -- instrumental in handling contractor registrations.

## Section 4.2 – Contractor Background Checks Increased Tax Collections

At the request of County Executive Budish, the AIG also reviews whether contractors seeking to do business with the County – and receiving payments from the County – have in fact paid any delinquent taxes. As a result of the contractor background screening, several contractors are now on payment plans to address delinquent County property taxes and court costs or have fully paid such costs.

To date, the AIG has been able to identify two million six hundred thirty-eight thousand six hundred seventy-nine dollars and forty-two cents **(\$2,638,679.42)** in unpaid taxes by County contractors.

## Section 4.3 – Debarment Procedures

During this reporting period, fourteen (14) debarment matters were completed by the AIG. The AIG determined to debar two (2) contractors for three years, one (1) contractor was debarred for five (5) years and the remaining eleven (11) contractors were not debarred. Additionally, twenty-seven (27) new debarment matters were initiated by the AIG.

# SECTION 5:

## OTHER AGENCY ACTIVITY

**5.1 DRIVER'S LICENSE ABSTRACT REVIEW**

**5.2 PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS**

**5.3 EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**



*During the state lockdown, the AIG produced a new and interactive ethics training video for employees to satisfy their annual training requirement.*

## Section 5.1 – Driver’s License Abstract Review

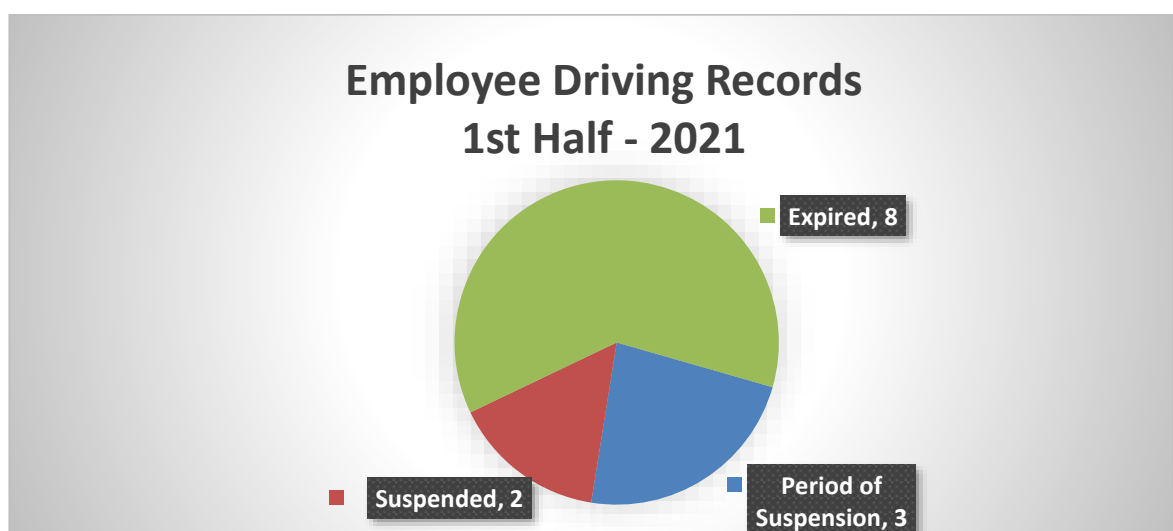
Twice a year, the AIG is required to review the state driving records of employees who are authorized to operate County-owned vehicles or who drive their own vehicles in the course of County employment. The goal is to ensure that the County is not placed at risk by employees driving while their licenses are under suspension. In an effort to increase compliance and reduce County liability, the AIG began reviewing employee driving records on a quarterly basis.

As required, the AIG reviewed the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles' records for the 2,039 employees who reported that they operate County owned vehicles or drive their personal vehicles for County purposes. This includes employees who requested mileage reimbursements from the County for the use of their personal vehicles.

The good news is that during the review conducted in the last six months, less than 1% of the employees reviewed had expired or suspended licenses.

As a result of the Driver’s License Review, the AIG identified a total of eleven (11) potential violations of County Policy. The employees in question either had: 1) suspended license (2 employees), expired license (8 employees) or 2) periods of suspension (3 employee).

The identified employees were referred to department directors and the Department of Human Resources for further review and, if necessary, discipline.





The Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles' website indicates that an automatic extension of certain renewal deadlines was granted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the website states the following regarding House Bill 404:

**House Bill 404 Extends Expiration Date of Driver Licenses, Identification Cards and Vehicle Registrations**

Due to the ongoing pandemic, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine has signed Ohio House Bill 404, which extends the expiration date of driver licenses (DL), identification cards (ID), and vehicle registrations beyond December 1, 2020. Now, if a customer's expiration date on their DL, ID, or vehicle registration is March 9, 2020, to April 1, 2021, the expiration date has been automatically extended and will remain valid until July 1, 2021.

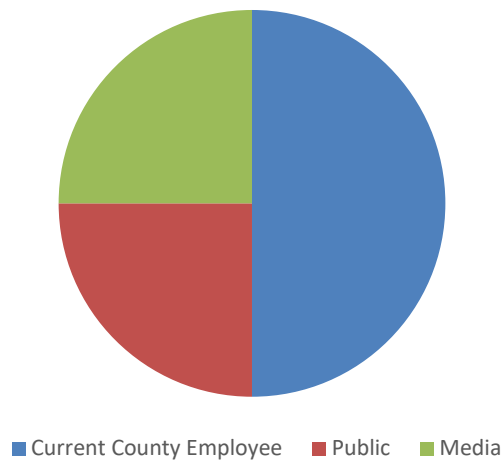
The AIG's most recent review revealed that fifty-five (55) employees who drive for the County fell into this category and their expiration dates were automatically extended to July 1, 2021 by the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

The latest review, which was conducted after July 1, 2021, confirmed that the vast majority of County employees had renewed their licenses during or before the extension expired. Only eight (8) of the employees reviewed in this reporting period had expired licenses.

## Section 5.2 – Public Records Requests

During this reporting period, the AIG processed four (4) public records requests. The AIG received two (2) requests from current County employees, one (1) request from the public and one (1) request from the media.

Public Records Requests



## Section 5.3 – Education and Outreach



A key ingredient for the AIG's success is public and employee awareness. The AIG welcomes the opportunity to meet with County officials and employees to proactively assist with issues and provide insight into the AIG's role within County government. To memorialize the significance of ethics education, the AIG restructured its staff and created an Ethics and Education Counsel position to manage the office's education and outreach efforts.

During the first half of 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the AIG continued to offer virtual presentations and conduct specially requested ethics training for County departments as well as non-County entities. During the state lockdown, the AIG

produced a new and interactive ethics training video for employees to satisfy their annual training requirement.

### **Participation in Expanded New - Employee Orientation & Training Process**

In the first half of 2021, the County continued to operate under a hiring freeze, but the AIG remained prepared to conduct new-hire ethics training as part of HR's onboarding process.

Under new hire ethics training model, employees return to orientation for a second day to spend approximately three hours with AIG staff learning about the various components of the County Ethics Code and how to approach ethical dilemmas if/when they arise. Employees also review and discuss a series of examples, both hypothetical and from real past situations. These trainings take place every two weeks at the County Administrative Headquarters. Due to the County hiring freeze, as a result of COVID-19, the AIG temporarily suspended in person ethics training. Ethics training is now offered virtually and on demand, as needed.

### **Selection by U.S. State Department to Meet with International Delegation of Anti-Corruption Leaders**

Over the past four years the U.S. Department of State has selected Cuyahoga County to meet with various delegations of foreign leaders and journalists as part of the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program. The State Department brings these leaders to Cuyahoga County to learn about the AIG, how it was created and best practices for combating local corruption. The program was coordinated by the Cleveland Council on World Affairs.

During the first half of 2021, the AIG was chosen to meet with a delegation that included representatives from the Middle East and North Africa regions on the topic "Transparency and Accountability in Government." This session focused on the effects of transparency and accountability on local public corruption.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions on travel and in-person meetings, this session was conducted virtually.

### **AIG Externship Program**

The AIG's Externship Program is a program designed to offer high school, college and graduate students, and recent graduates practical work experience while exposing

them to the mission of the AIG. The externs actively explore concepts impacting three (3) disciplines: Contractor and Lobbyist Requirements, Interviews and Investigations, and Compliance and Ethics. In the past, extern applicants expressed an interest in employment within the following disciplines: Law, Public Policy, and Business Administration.

During the first half of 2021 the AIG did not host externs.

### **County Public Policy Fellowship program**

In 2019, for the first time, the AIG participated in the County Public Policy Fellowship Program. According to the program website:

The Public Policy Fellowship Program was established by the Office of the Cuyahoga County Executive in 2011 to cultivate the next generation of public sector leaders in Northeast Ohio. Through the program, which operates during the summer, entrepreneurial and highly motivated undergraduate and graduate level students gain a broad overview of county government through practical experience in a variety of policy areas.

The goals of the program are to:

- Provide a practical experience in Cuyahoga County government;
- Inspire innovative, effective, and ethical public leadership for Northeast Ohio; and
- Invigorate County projects by injecting fresh eyes and new perspectives.

Due to COVID-19, the Public Policy Fellowship Program was cancelled for 2020 and has not yet resumed.

# SECTION 6: GOALS

**6.1 Review of First Half Goals**

**6.2 Goals for Second Half**



## Section 6.1 – Review of 2021 First Half Goals

In its prior semi-annual report, the AIG set forth specific goals relating to the mission of the agency. Although the COVID-19 crisis required significant changes, most of these goals were achieved. As discussed below, these goals were as follows:

- 1) **Expand On-Line Education Outreach.** Achieved. The AIG created and delivered a revised ethics training presentation with interactive tests.
- 2) **Expand Tax Facilitation Efforts.** Achieved. The AIG expanded its cooperation with the County Treasurer and County Prosecutor's Office and precipitated an additional \$620,620 in tax collections.
- 3) **Review and Update Preventative Documents.** Achieved. The AIG worked with the Ohio Ethics Commission and the Citizens' League of Cleveland to review, revise and update documents and create presentations that explain the County Ethics Code and assist in fraud prevention.
- 4) **Expand Potential Debarment & Contractor Reviews.** Achieved. The AIG completed 14 debarments and initiated 27 new debarment cases.
- 5) **Assist Law Enforcement.** Achieved. The AIG continued to work with local law enforcement with respect to on-going public corruption investigations and scheduled trial(s). The AIG expects to provide testimony on behalf of, and in support of, the State of Ohio in at least two pending criminal matters.

## Section 6.2 – Goals for Second Half 2021

In light of the current situation, and with reduced staffing for the second half of 2021, the AIG intends to achieve the following goals:

- 1) **Establish a tip reporting hotline in cooperation with the County Sheriff.** The AIG will work with the County Sheriff to create a confidential tip hotline to report complaints and facilitate improvements regarding the County Jail.
- 2) **Cooperate with Local Law Enforcement in Public Corruption Trials.** The AIG will prepare for and provide testimony as appropriate in public corruption trials currently scheduled for the second half of 2021.
- 3) **Fill Open Positions Within the AIG.** As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the AIG has important employment positions that need to be filled during the second half of 2021.



A copy of this report (Cuyahoga County AIG Semi-annual Report – 1st Half 2021) has been made available for public inspection at the AIG offices and is posted on the AIG website at <http://inspectorgeneral.cuyahogacounty.us>. If you need assistance relative to this report, please contact our agency at 216-698-2101.

#### **REPORT FRAUD, WASTE, OR ABUSE**

To report alleged fraud, waste, abuse, corruption, misconduct, misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance relative to County government, use one of the following methods:

- Submit a Report a Concern complaint on the website at <http://inspectorgeneral.cuyahogacounty.us>
- Write to the Agency of Inspector General, 2079 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Sixth Floor, Cleveland, Ohio 44115
- Call the Agency of Inspector General Whistleblower Hotline at 216-698-2999



# **APPENDIX 1: BACKGROUND AND JURISDICTION**

## Section 1.1 – Introduction

The County ("County") Agency of Inspector General ("AIG") was established by the Cuyahoga County Executive ("County Executive") and Cuyahoga County Council ("County Council") to protect taxpayers' interests by promoting honesty and accountability in County government. In furtherance of this mission, the AIG is granted broad authority to conduct investigations, examinations, inspections and reviews relating to fraud, corruption, waste, abuse, misfeasance, malfeasance and nonfeasance in the operations of County government. In addition, the AIG is designated as the ethics investigative officer for all issues arising under the County Code.<sup>7</sup> In this capacity, the AIG is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that County elected officials, employees, contractors and lobbyists who do business with the County meet the highest ethical standards.

## Section 1.2 – Cuyahoga County Ethics Ordinance

The County Council enacted the permanent Ethics Ordinance in Ordinance No. O2011-0008, which was signed by the County Executive and became effective on April 8, 2011.<sup>8</sup> On July 12, 2013, the County Council compiled and codified the County's general and permanent laws as enacted by ordinances of the County Council as the County Code. The provisions of the Ethics Ordinance were codified in Title 4 of the County Code. On April 26, 2016, the County Council revised the County Ethics Code with an effective date of May 27, 2016. Chapter 407 of the County Code officially designates the Inspector General as the ethics investigative officer for the County and requires the Inspector General to conduct all investigations pertaining to Title 4 of the County Code. Accordingly, Section 407.01 (D) of the County Code grants the Inspector General the following enforcement authority when a violation of Title 4 of the County Code is uncovered:

- *Letter of Notification.* A Letter of Notification informs a public official or employee of his or her violation of a provision of Title 4 of the County Code. The Inspector General may issue a letter of notification when it finds that a violation

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<sup>7</sup> On July 13, 2013, the County Ethics Ordinance was codified into Title 4 of the County Code.

<sup>8</sup> The Ethics Ordinance was subsequently amended on April 26, 2011 (O2011-0023), July 26, 2011 (O2011-0035), October 25, 2011 (O2011-0052), January 10, 2012 (O2012-0002), May 22, 2012 (O2012-0004), and November 13, 2012 (O2012-0032).

of Title 4 of the County Code was clearly unintentional or inadvertent. The letter may advise the respondent of any steps to be taken to avoid future violations.

- *Letter of Admonition.* A Letter of Admonition expresses disapproval of a public official's or employee's violation of a provision of Title 4 of the County Code. The Inspector General may issue a letter of admonition when it finds that the violation of Title 4 of the County Code was knowingly committed but is nevertheless a minor offense.
- *Letter of Censure.* A Letter of Censure condemns an employee for his or her violation of a provision of Title 4 of the County Code. The Inspector General may issue a letter of censure when the respondent intentionally or knowingly committed major violations or has committed repeated minor violations.
- *Recommendations to the County Executive, Prosecutor, and Council.* When the Inspector General finds a violation of Title 4 of the County Code was intentional or done knowingly, the Inspector General may make a recommendation to the County Executive, Prosecutor, or County Council (depending on the appointing authority), including but not limited to a recommendation for suspension, forfeiture of office or removal from office, and/or banning or temporarily suspending the respondent's (or respondent's Associated Businesses or organizations') right to solicit, bid on or obtain a contract with or from the County, as allowed by applicable law.
- *Notice to the Ohio Ethics Commission.* When the Inspector General finds that a public official or employee has recklessly or knowingly violated Ohio Provisions of Title 4 of the County Code, the Inspector General shall consult with the Ohio Ethics Commission ("OEC") to determine whether the matter should be referred to the OEC.
- *Referral to Additional Ethics Training.* Upon finding a violation of Title 4 of the County Code, the Inspector General may require the respondent undergo ethics training in addition to or in lieu of any other penalties imposed upon the respondent.
- *Referral to External Enforcement.* The Inspector General shall refer possible violation(s) of any state, federal, or local law, or rule, regulation or policy to the appropriate civil, criminal or administrative agencies charged with enforcement of said violation.

In addition to these investigatory and enforcement functions, Title 4 of the County Code requires the Inspector General perform the following disclosure/prevention functions:

- The Inspector General shall advise elected officials or employees, who in the course of carrying out his or her duties, have been offered or are discussing future employment with a business that is presently dealing with the County concerning matters within the public official or employee's current official duties, to ensure that person complies with all requirements in Title 4 of the County Code and related statutes regarding future employment and disclosure of such possible future employment.<sup>9</sup>
- The Inspector General shall receive allegations of non-criminal whistleblower complaints.<sup>10</sup>
- The Inspector General shall receive allegations from county elected officials and employees who by law are required to report criminal behavior in County operations to the Inspector General within five (5) days of becoming aware of the behavior.<sup>11</sup>
- The Inspector General or the Department of Law may receive and rule on conflict of interest disclosures for employees.<sup>12</sup>
- The Inspector General must review and respond to secondary employment disclosures.<sup>13</sup>
- The Inspector General must review board/commission appointments by the County for conflicts of interest.<sup>14</sup>
- The Inspector General shall obtain financial disclosure statements from certain County officials and employees.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> County Code, Section 403.09 (B), formerly Article 7, Section 16(D) of the Ethics Ordinance.

<sup>10</sup> County Code, Section 406.01 (B), formerly Article 7, Section 17(B) of the Ethics Ordinance.

<sup>11</sup> County Code, Section 406.01 (A), formerly Article 7, Section 18(A) of the Ethics Ordinance.

<sup>12</sup> County Code, Section 403.04 (F), formerly Article 7, Section 23 of the Ethics Ordinance.

<sup>13</sup> County Code, Section 403.08 (D), formerly Article 7, Section 26 of the Ethics Ordinance.

<sup>14</sup> County Code, Section 403.04 (E) and 407.01 (L), formerly Article 7, Section 27 of the Ethics Ordinance.

- The Inspector General must create and maintain a County lobbyist registry.<sup>16</sup>
- The Inspector General must create and maintain a County contractor registry.<sup>17</sup>

## Section 1.3 – Agency of Inspector General Ordinance

On June 14, 2011, the County Council created the AIG by enacting the Agency of Inspector General Ordinance No. O2011-0019 (“AIG Ordinance”).<sup>18</sup> On July 12, 2013, the County Council compiled and codified the County’s general and permanent laws as enacted by ordinances of the County Council as the County Code. The provisions of the AIG Ordinance have been codified in Title 2 of the County Code. Title 2 of the County Code creates an independent agency under the direction of the Inspector General, and also sets forth specific requirements and limitations designed to ensure that the AIG remains accountable to the public.

The AIG is authorized to conduct all examinations under Section 2.05 of the Cuyahoga Charter and does, therefore, have all such rights and duties to investigate fraud, corruption, waste, abuse, misfeasance, malfeasance, and nonfeasance without interference or pressure from any other public official or employee.<sup>19</sup> So long as all budgetary parameters are kept, the Inspector General is granted the ability to employ assistants and employees as shall be reasonably necessary to assist the Inspector General in carrying out the duties of the AIG.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the investigatory function, Title 2 of the County Code sets forth the following additional mandatory functions for the AIG:

- The Inspector General shall serve as the County’s chief ethics officer and is charged with the responsibility of investigating and enforcing Title 4 of the

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<sup>15</sup> County Code, Sections 403.07 and 407.01(I), formerly Article 7, Sections 29 and 31 of the Ethics Ordinance.

<sup>16</sup> County Code, Section 405.01 (A), formerly Article 7, Section 32 of the Ethics Ordinance.

<sup>17</sup> County Code, Section 501.19 (B), formerly Article 7, Section 34 of the Ethics Ordinance.

<sup>18</sup> The AIG Ordinance was amended effective June 27, 2012 (Ordinance No. O2012-0008).

<sup>19</sup> County Code, Section 204.01(B)(3), formerly Section 2(c) of the AIG Ordinance.

<sup>20</sup> County Code, Section 204.01(B)(2), formerly Section 2(b) of the AIG Ordinance.

County Code in accordance with the terms of said law. In so doing, the Inspector General shall cooperate with the County's Personnel Review Commission.<sup>21</sup> The Inspector General shall not interfere with the authority of the Personnel Review Commission to ensure "compliance with ethics resolutions or ordinances as passed by the Council" under Section 9.02(3) of the Cuyahoga Charter.<sup>22</sup>

- The Inspector General shall establish a "hotline" and website to receive complaints from either anonymous or identified persons, and he/she shall investigate all complaints, tips, and any other filings and submittals received by the AIG regardless of the format or forum through which such information or documents are received. Without regard to how such documents are received by the AIG, all documents prepared or received by the AIG, including, without limitation, all complaints, tips, and any other filings and submittals received by it shall be considered part of the Inspector General's investigative files.<sup>23</sup>
- The Inspector General shall have the powers and rights to investigate all County contracts subject to the limitations set forth in Section 204.01(B)(4) of the County Code.<sup>24</sup>
- If an investigation reveals reasonable grounds to believe that a violation of any state, federal, or local law, rule, regulation, or policy has taken place, the Inspector General shall notify the appropriate civil, criminal, or administrative agencies in charge with enforcement of said violation. If an investigation reveals reasonable grounds to believe that a violation of a rule, regulation, or policy governing a County employee has taken place, the Inspector General shall notify the employee's appointing authority and if applicable the Department of Human Resources.<sup>25</sup>
- The Inspector General shall cooperate with other governmental agencies to recover such costs from other entities involved in willful misconduct in regard to County funds and return said funds to the County's General Fund.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The name Human Resource Commission was changed to Personnel Review Commission via a Charter change and approved by County voters in 2013, <http://hrc.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/home.aspx>.

<sup>22</sup> County Code, Section 204.01(B)(3)(a), formerly Section 2(c)(i) of the AIG Ordinance.

<sup>23</sup> County Code, Section 204.01(B)(3)(b), formerly Section 2(c)(ii) of the AIG Ordinance.

<sup>24</sup> County Code, Section 204.01(B)(3)(c), formerly Section 2(c)(iii) of the AIG Ordinance.

<sup>25</sup> County Code, Section 204.01(B)(3)(d), formerly Section 2(c)(iv) of the AIG Ordinance.

<sup>26</sup> County Code, Section 204.01(B)(3)(e), formerly Section 2(c)(v) of the AIG Ordinance.

- The Inspector General shall prepare and publish on its website semi-annual reports (the first of which will cover the period January 1<sup>st</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup> and will be due in July and the second of which will cover the period July 1<sup>st</sup> – December 31<sup>st</sup> and will be due in February) concerning the work and activities of the AIG pertaining to closed investigations, including statistical information regarding the disposition of closed investigations, audits, and other reviews. The reports shall include the total number of complaints received during each reporting period, the number that required active investigation, the number that resulted in prosecution or other disciplinary actions, and the number of investigations closed, along with the cost incurred over and above the cost of salaries of AIG employees.<sup>27</sup>
- The Inspector General shall cooperate with the Department of Internal Auditing to avoid duplication of effort and to share information, so long as such sharing does not compromise an ongoing investigation. At the request of the Inspector General and with the approval of the Internal Auditor, the Department of Internal Auditing may provide services to the Inspector General for a specific investigation. The Inspector General shall not interfere with the authority of the Department of Internal Auditing to conduct audits pursuant to the Cuyahoga County Charter, any applicable ordinances, and any rules established by the Internal Audit Committee.<sup>28</sup>

In conducting its duties, the AIG is required to avoid interfering in any ongoing outside criminal, civil or administrative investigation/prosecution.<sup>29</sup> The AIG is also required to develop internal policies and procedures that ensure an investigation subject's constitutional rights are protected.<sup>30</sup>

The AIG can only be abolished upon the affirmative vote of at least eight (8) members of County Council and executed by the County Executive.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> County Code, Section 204.01 (B) (3) (f), formerly Section 2(c) (vi) of the AIG Ordinance.

<sup>28</sup> County Code, Section 204.01 (B) (4) (d), formerly Section 2(d) (iv) of the AIG Ordinance.

<sup>29</sup> County Code, Section 204.01 (B) (4) (a), formerly Section 2(d) (i) of the AIG Ordinance.

<sup>30</sup> County Code, Section 204.01 (B) (4) (b), formerly Section 2(d) (ii) of the AIG Ordinance.

<sup>31</sup> County Code, Section 204.01 (E), formerly Section 3(e) of the AIG Ordinance.

## Section 1.4 – The Charter

On November 6, 2018, the taxpayers of Cuyahoga County voted to include the AIG in the County Charter. On December 27, 2018, Article XV, Section 15.01 became effective.

Pursuant to Section 15.01 (1), (7), and (8) of the Charter, the Inspector General has the following powers, duties and rights:

**(1) Powers and Duties.** The Inspector General shall serve as the County's chief ethics officer and shall direct the Agency of Inspector General. The County Executive and the County Council shall appropriate funding for the Agency's operations, fairly allocated through the regular budget process based on available resources. The Council may, by ordinance, further delineate the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the Agency of Inspector General, consistent with this Article XV.

**(7) Access to County Information.** The Inspector General shall have the right to obtain full and unrestricted access to all records, reports, plans, projections, matters, contracts, memoranda, correspondence, and any other materials, including electronic data, of Cuyahoga County, relevant to any inquiry or investigation undertaken pursuant to this Article XV, except as may be legally limited, such as through attorney-client privilege or provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

**(8) Subpoena Power.** The Inspector General shall have authority to subpoena witnesses, administer oaths or affirmations, take testimony and compel the production of such books, papers, records and documents, including electronic data as is deemed to be relevant to any inquiry or investigation undertaken pursuant to this Article XV.

## Section 1.5 -The Cuyahoga County Debarment Law, Procedures and Review Board Ordinance

On December 11, 2012, the County Council established the County Debarment Law, Procedures and Review Board Ordinance by enacting Ordinance No. O2012-0026 ("the Debarment Law"). On July 12, 2013, the County Council compiled and codified the County's general and permanent laws as enacted by ordinances of the County Council as the County Code. The provisions of the Debarment Law were codified in Chapter 505 of the County Code. Chapter 505 of the County Code was established



to protect the County and its taxpayers and to ensure the County only engages in business with contractors<sup>32</sup> who demonstrate quality business practices and maintain the highest ethical standards. Accordingly, Chapter 505 of the County Code establishes a procedure for the AIG to debar contractors who meet certain criteria related to poor business practices or unethical behavior.<sup>33</sup> Contractors who are debarred may not submit bids, proposals, statements of qualifications or any other offers to contract with the County and may not enter into any contract or agreement with the County during the duration of the applicable debarment period.<sup>34</sup>

The AIG is responsible for debarring contractors who demonstrate poor business practices and/or unethical behavior.<sup>35</sup> The AIG may debar a contractor for 5 years for certain criminal convictions or civil judgments within the preceding 5 years anywhere in the United States. Based on certain prohibited activity, the AIG may also debar contractors for 3 years or 18 months. The AIG may also suspend contractors who are currently suspended or debarred by certain enumerated entities.<sup>36</sup>

As a practical matter, during the debarment/suspension period, debarred/suspended contractors may not:

- 1) Submit bids, proposals, statements of qualifications or any other offers to contract with the County; or
- 2) Enter into any contract or agreement with the County; or
- 3) Serve as a subcontractor on any County contract or agreement.<sup>37</sup>

On April 28, 2015, §, County Council enacted new Debarment Rules which became effective on April 29, 2015.<sup>38</sup> The new rule states the commencement date for the debarment period under the County law commences from the date of issuance of the debarment.

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<sup>32</sup> Section 402.01 of the County Code defines a contractor as any person or entity that is a party to an Agreement with the County, as defined in Section 102.01(A) of the Code.

<sup>33</sup> See County Code, Sections 505.03 (A), (B), and (C).

<sup>34</sup> See County Code, Section 505.02(A).

<sup>35</sup> Codified as Chapter 505 of the County Code.

<sup>36</sup> County Code, Section 505.07, formerly Section 7(B) of the Debarment Law.

<sup>37</sup> County Code, Section 505.02(A), formerly Section 2(A) of the Debarment Law.

<sup>38</sup> County Ordinance 02014-0031.

### *Debarment Review Board*

Pursuant to Chapter 505 of the County Code, a contractor may appeal the AIG's decision to debar the contractor to the Cuyahoga County Debarment Review Board. Effective June 16, 2014, County Ordinance No. O2014-0010 changed the composition of the Debarment Review Board. The County Fiscal Officer was replaced with a judge appointed by the Presiding Judge of the County Common Pleas Court.<sup>39</sup> All members of the Debarment Review Board shall serve without compensation.

## **Section 1.6 – The Inspector General's Jurisdiction**

### *Responsibilities: Enforce the Ethics Code; Investigate Waste, Fraud and Abuse*

Under Section 15.01(2) of the Charter, the jurisdiction of the AIG is as follows:

To the maximum extent permitted under the Constitution of the State of Ohio and this Charter, the authority of the Agency of Inspector General to investigate possible ethical violations in the conduct of County business shall extend to any employee, official, or appointee of the County and any person or entity doing business with the County.

More specifically under the County Ethics Code, the Inspector General is authorized to investigate alleged wrongful acts or omissions committed by County elected officials and employees under the auspices of the County Executive and County Council.

Also, pursuant to County Code Section 204.01, the Inspector General's authority extends to:

- Investigate and enforce the County Ethics Ordinance in accordance with the terms of said ordinance; and

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<sup>39</sup> On August 8, 2014 Judge Timothy McMonagle agreed to serve as the Chair of the Debarment Review Board. On June 29, 2016, County Council amended the Debarment Review Board Ordinance to permit the County Executive to appoint and Council to confirm the chair of the Board. The chair shall be an attorney at law in good standing in the state of Ohio and shall have at least five years cumulative experience in litigation or appellate practice.

- Investigate fraud, corruption, waste, abuse, misfeasance, malfeasance, and nonfeasance by a Public Official or employee without interference.

Those individuals who contract with County agencies or otherwise do business with the County may also fall under the purview of this agency. The AIG does not become involved in private disputes, labor/management issues, or litigation. The Agency does not review or override the decision of a court or the findings of any administrative body. Likewise, the Agency has no authority to investigate allegations concerning any federal, municipal or local officials, agencies, or governing bodies.

The AIG is not an advocate for either the county agency or the complainant in any particular case. The Agency's obligation is to ensure that the investigative process is conducted fully, fairly, and impartially.

### *Agency of Inspector General Requirements*

The Inspector General is appointed by the County Executive subject to confirmation of County Council.<sup>40</sup> According to Section 15.01 (4) of the Charter, the Inspector General shall be appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by Council, for a term of four years. The term of the incumbent Inspector General shall expire on December 31, 2020. Each subsequent Inspector General shall be appointed or reappointed for a term commencing on January 1, 2021, and every four years thereafter. Reappointments shall be subject to Council confirmation.

Section 15.01(3) of the Charter states the Inspector General must have the following qualifications, (1) juris doctor degree from an accredited institution of higher learning; and (2) at least five years' experience as an inspector general, certified public accountant, auditor, licensed attorney, law enforcement officer, or other investigative officer involving supervisory or managerial experience.

Pursuant to Section 15.01 (5) of the Charter, the Inspector General may only be removed for cause by resolution receiving the affirmative vote of at least eight members of the Council. The Council, however, cannot vote to remove until the Inspector General has had the opportunity to be heard and to present his or her case for retention in office. Additionally, Council may enter executive session to discuss the question of removal as provided by general law so long as Council holds at least one public hearing where the Inspector General and the public have an opportunity to be heard.

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<sup>40</sup> County Code, Section 204.01 (C)(2), formerly Section 3(b) of the AIG Ordinance.

Finally, in the event of a vacancy prior to the expiration of the Inspector General's term, the County Executive shall appoint a successor to complete the unexpired term, subject to confirmation by Council. Note, in the event a vacancy occurs less than two years prior to the expiration of the Inspector General's four-year term, the County Executive may appoint an Inspector General to complete the unexpired term and serve a subsequent four-year term, subject to confirmation by Council.

## Section 1.7 – Transparency – Agency of Inspector General Website

The AIG is dedicated to increasing transparency in County government. In furtherance of this goal, the AIG website, [www.inspectorgeneral.cuyahogacounty.us](http://www.inspectorgeneral.cuyahogacounty.us), was created and is continuously updated to provide the following information pertaining to AIG activity:

- A link where individuals can confidentially report fraud, waste and abuse to the AIG;
- Links to all enabling legislation and an AIG organizational chart;
- Copies of certain investigation and examination reports;<sup>41</sup>
- The current County contractor and lobbyist registration lists;
- Debarment and Suspension details;
- Ethics compliance guidance issued by the AIG;
- Copies of all semi-annual reports issued by the AIG;
- Detailed instructions on how to complete contractor/lobbyist registration and ethics training; and
- Ethics training for contractors, lobbyist, and County employees.

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<sup>41</sup> The AIG posts investigation/examination reports where violations of County policy or other laws have been established and the release of the report will not compromise any subsequent criminal investigation. All other reports not deemed confidential by law can be obtained by submitting a public records request to the AIG.

# APPENDIX 2: INVESTIGATIONS

## Investigation Procedures

### Intake: How Do We Get Cases?

Tips and complaints from concerned employees and citizens provide the lifeblood of a successful inspector general agency. Accordingly, the AIG established the following mechanisms that allow potential whistleblowers to easily and discreetly file complaints:

- *AIG Whistleblower Hotline (216-698-2999)* – This number is prominently displayed on the Inspector General's website, on post cards and business cards distributed to employees and members of the public, and on posters displayed throughout all County buildings.
- *Report a Concern Messages* – An individual may report a concern by accessing the Inspector General's website at <http://inspectorgeneral.cuyahogacounty.us>. Individuals who click the "Report a Concern" link on the AIG and County Executive websites are directed to an online complaint form. Submitted forms are confidentially e-mailed directly to AIG staff.
- *Direct Phone/Mail/Walk-In* – Individuals are always permitted to directly contact AIG staff with complaints or concerns.
- *Ask Armond* – Questions or comments alleging fraud, waste or abuse submitted to the County Executive are forwarded to the AIG for review.<sup>42</sup>
- *Referral from County Officials* – County officials are encouraged to forward any complaints regarding fraud, waste or abuse to the AIG.

### Triage: What Happens to Tips and Complaints?

Matters alleging fraud, waste, abuse, and corruption within or impacting the County are considered tips or leads. Incoming tips or leads, regardless of the source, are logged into our electronic database and assigned a complaint number. Our goal is to review each tip or lead within ten (10) business days. During this review the following elements are assessed:

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<sup>42</sup> Any person wishing to submit a concern to County Executive Budish may email the County Executive by accessing the Cuyahoga County Office of the County Executive webpage at <http://executive.cuyahogacounty.us/>.

- *Jurisdiction* – Does the AIG have jurisdiction over the subject of the complaint?
- *Sufficiency of Information* – Does the complaint present sufficient information to warrant further inquiry?
- *Source of information* – How reliable is the source of the information?
- *Nature of the alleged wrongdoing* – What is the actual negative impact of the alleged wrongdoing, if it is in fact occurring?
- *Potential for exposing systemic issues* – Does the complaint raise larger systemic issues that may need to be addressed?

Anyone may file a complaint with the AIG. At times, complaints are forwarded by other agencies or officials. Complaints may be made anonymously; however, it may be difficult to verify the information provided or ask additional questions. Therefore, we encourage complainants to provide detailed information supporting an allegation when leaving an anonymous complaint.

The AIG does not offer legal advice or opinions to complainants. In instances where it appears a complainant seeks legal assistance, or where it appears another agency is better suited to address a complainant's issue, the Agency will advise the complainant that he or she may want to consult with private legal counsel or, when possible, will direct the complainant to a more appropriate agency, organization, or resource.

After weighing each of these factors, the Agency of Inspector General issues one (1) of the following preliminary decisions on each complaint:

- *Decline Investigation for Lack of Jurisdiction* – The AIG will not investigate the allegations in the complaint because they fall outside of the jurisdiction of the AIG. When appropriate, however, the AIG will refer the complainant to the proper entity with jurisdiction to address the complaint.
- *Decline Investigation for Lack of Information* – The AIG will not initiate investigation where a complaint lacks sufficient detailed allegations of wrongdoing.
- *Decline Investigation Other* – The AIG may conduct a brief preliminary review (e.g., reviewing records, meeting with management) to evaluate the merits of a complaint. If the information obtained during this preliminary review indicates a strong likelihood that the complaint will not be substantiated, the AIG may decline to initiate a full investigation into the complaint.

- *Management Inquiry* – A management inquiry is a complaint that is forwarded to department management with a response requirement. The AIG will review the response to determine if further investigation is warranted. The management inquiry will generally require the department to respond to the veracity of the specific allegation and to cite to any corrective action taken. A management inquiry is typically used when the allegations are specific, but minor if true.
- *Management Referrals* – A management referral is a complaint that is forwarded to department management with no response requirement. Management referrals are used when the complaint alleges behavior that is best addressed by the applicable Department or by Human Resources.
- *Initiate Investigation<sup>43</sup>, Examinations, or Reviews* – Complaints that are assigned for investigation, examination, or review.

### *Investigation Determination and Dispositions*

Upon completion of a full investigation, the AIG Investigator prepares a Report of Investigation which may include recommended policy or program enhancements resulting from the investigation. Final investigation reports and recommendations are submitted to the Inspector General for review and approval. The Inspector General will issue one (1) or more of the following responses on each completed investigation:

#### **No Violation – No Referral**

The investigation failed to reveal reasonable grounds to believe an individual violated any state, federal, or local law, or any policy, rule or regulation governing a County employee. In addition, the investigation failed to reveal any other systemic issue warranting intervention by County management. The resulting investigation report and/or findings are not published or referred out with the exception that an individual considered a subject of the investigation is notified in writing of the findings.

#### **No Violation – Management Referral**

The investigation failed to reveal reasonable grounds to believe an individual violated any state, federal, or local law, or any policy, rule or regulation governing a County employee. The investigation, however, revealed a systemic issue warranting intervention or

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<sup>43</sup> For purposes of this report, the term investigation includes examinations and/or reviews.



consideration by County management. The resulting investigation report and/or findings are referred to the County Executive and the appropriate County Department Director but are not published. The AIG may request a written response from the County Executive or the applicable Department Director addressing the issue and identifying any remedial action. An individual considered a subject of the investigation is notified in writing of the findings.

***Violation –  
Management Referral***

The investigation revealed reasonable grounds to believe an individual violated a policy, rule or regulation governing a County employee. The resulting investigation report and/or findings are referred to the County Executive and the Director of Human Resources for consideration of corrective and/or disciplinary action for the individual. The resulting investigation report and/or findings are published. If the investigation revealed systemic issues warranting intervention or consideration by County management, the report and/or findings may be referred to the applicable Department Director. The AIG may request a written response from the County Executive or the applicable Department Director addressing the issue and identifying any remedial action. An individual considered a subject of the investigation is notified in writing of the findings.

***Violation –  
Management and Law  
Enforcement Referral***

The investigation revealed reasonable grounds to believe an individual violated a policy, rule or regulation governing a County employee and a state, federal, or local law. The resulting investigation report and/or findings are referred to the County Executive and the Director of Human Resources for consideration of corrective and/or disciplinary action for the individual. In addition, the report and/or findings are referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency. The investigation report and/or findings are published unless the matter has been referred to the County Prosecutor. If the investigation

revealed systemic issues warranting intervention or consideration by County management, the report and/or findings may be referred to the applicable Department Director. The AIG may request a written response from the County Executive or the applicable Department Director addressing the issue and identifying any remedial action. An individual considered a subject of the investigation is notified in writing of the findings.

***Violation – Letters of  
Notification,  
Admonition or Censure***

The investigation revealed reasonable grounds to believe an individual violated a provision of Title 4 of the County Code. Previously discussed sections of this report describe the circumstances justifying issuance of each type of letter.

***Consolidated with  
Ongoing Investigation***

The subject matter of the investigation is sufficiently related to an ongoing investigation such that consolidation of the investigations is warranted.

***Referred for Debarment***

The investigation revealed reasonable grounds to believe the contractor violated a provision of Chapter 505 of the County Code. The investigation report and/or findings are published.

## **Confidentiality Agreement with HHS**

Since 2013, the AIG and the County Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Employment and Family Services have cooperated via a Memorandum of Understanding whereby the AIG has undertaken the responsibility of conducting investigations on behalf of this department. Consistent with the terms of the Memorandum, any employee misconduct discovered in the course of the investigation will be reported solely to the covered department. Only the HHS Administrator and/or Director may report any misconduct to the County Department of Human Resources and the County Executive. The AIG is prohibited from disclosing the findings or results of such investigations in the semi-annual reports as such information is exempted from disclosure by RC Section 5101.27. Nonetheless, for statistical purposes only, the AIG will include a general reference to any investigation conducted pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding.

# APPENDIX 3: ETHICS COMPLIANCE

# Ethics Compliance Requirements

## *Introduction*

Chapter 407 of the County Code officially designates the Inspector General as the ethics investigative officer for the County and requires the Inspector General to conduct all investigations pertaining to Title 4 of the County Code.

As a practical matter, the ethics-related functions performed by the AIG can be divided into four (4) broad categories:

- 1) Investigation and Enforcement;
- 2) Review and Advise;
- 3) Disclosure; and
- 4) Training.

## *Investigation and Enforcement*

Ethics complaints undergo the same triage and investigation process as general fraud, waste, or abuse complaints. The AIG's jurisdiction to investigate ethics complaints, however, is larger than its general investigative jurisdiction.

Ethics investigations that result in a finding that Title 4 of the County Code was violated are remedied in accordance with the enforcement powers granted to the AIG by the County Code. These enforcement powers are specifically described in Section 1.3 of this report.

## *Review and Advise*

An essential element in creating a culture of ethical behavior is to provide a mechanism for officials and employees to seek advice prior to taking a potentially unethical action. Accordingly, Title 4 of the County Code mandates certain County officials and employees seek a ruling from the AIG prior to engaging in any of the following activities:

- 1) Any activity that may constitute a conflict of interest;
- 2) Secondary employment; or
- 3) Accepting a County appointment to a board or commission.

In addition, the AIG offers specific and/or general guidance upon request on other ethics-related issues, including, but not limited to, the following:

- 1) Political activity for Classified employees;
- 2) Acceptance of gifts from contractors; or
- 3) Disclosure requirements.

### *Disclosure*

Transparency is widely encouraged as one of the most effective means to prevent corruption in government. Accordingly, Title 4 of the County Code requires the AIG manage the following public disclosure programs:

- 1) *County Contractor Registry* – All contractors doing business with the County are required to register with the AIG. Posting of this registry is required on the AIG website.
- 2) *County Lobbyist Registry* – All individuals/entities seeking to lobby County officials or employees must register with the AIG. Posting of this registry is required on the AIG website.
- 3) *Financial Disclosure Reports* – Certain County officials and employees are required to file financial disclosure statements with the AIG. These reports are maintained by the AIG and are available for review.
- 4) *Campaign Finance Reports* – The AIG is required to obtain all campaign finance reports and financial disclosure statements for all candidates for County elected office. These reports are maintained by the AIG and are available for review.

# **APPENDIX 4: CONTRACTORS AND LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION**

## Ethics Training and Registration

### *Introduction*

Title 4 of the County Code sets forth requirements for contractors and lobbyists doing business with the County. A contractor shall mean any person or entity that is a party to an Agreement with the County, as defined in Section 102.01(A) of the Code. Therefore, unless exempt, any person or entity that is a party to an Agreement with the County, are required to adhere to the provisions of Title 4 of the County Code.

### *Ethics Requirements*

Although not specifically required to do so, the AIG established an online ethics training program for all County contractors and lobbyists. The training program provides attendees with specific guidance on ethical business practices and the avoidance of improper methods of soliciting business from County officials and employees. Unless exempt or conducting less than \$10,000.00 in business with the County annually, all County contractors and lobbyists are required to complete this training program as a prerequisite to conducting business with the County.

The vendor background screening system was designed to provide a timely and extensive background screening of contractors and vendors in an effort to ensure that only responsible parties and businesses are given the opportunity to provide goods and services to the County.

The AIG is responsible for debarring contractors who demonstrate poor business practices and/or unethical behavior.<sup>44</sup> The AIG may debar a contractor for five (5) years for certain criminal convictions or civil judgments within the preceding five (5) years anywhere in the United States. Based on certain prohibited activity, the AIG may also debar contractors for three (3) years or eighteen (18) months. The AIG may also suspend contractors who are currently suspended or debarred by certain enumerated entities.<sup>45</sup>

As a practical matter, during the debarment/suspension period, debarred/suspended contractors may not:

- 1) Submit bids, proposals, statements of qualifications or any other offers to contract with the County; or

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<sup>44</sup> Codified as Chapter 505 of the County Code.

<sup>45</sup> County Code, Section 505.07, formerly Section 7(B) of the Debarment Law.

- 2) Enter into any contract or agreement with the County; or
- 3) Serve as a subcontractor on any County contract or agreement.<sup>46</sup>

On April 28, 2015, County Council enacted new Debarment Rules which became effective on April 29, 2015.<sup>47</sup> The new rule states the commencement date for the debarment period under the County law commences from the date of issuance of the debarment.

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<sup>46</sup> County Code, Section 505.02(A), formerly Section 2(A) of the Debarment Law.

<sup>47</sup> County Ordinance 02014-0031.