



# **OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL CITY OF JACKSONVILLE**

*“Enhancing Public Trust in Government Through Independent  
and Responsible Oversight”*

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

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**October 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024**

**Presented to the Citizens of Jacksonville  
January 14, 2025**



## OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL CITY OF JACKSONVILLE

January 14, 2025

Citizens of Jacksonville,

As another calendar year ends, I would like to present the 2024 Annual Report for the Jacksonville Office of Inspector General (OIG).

I am very proud of our office's work this year and feel our efforts demonstrated a fully staffed and functioning OIG. When I was appointed to this position three years ago, I promised the community that this office would foster an environment of effective and efficient government through oversight and process improvement.

During the year we received 96 complaints that were opened for review and closed with dispositions, we received 145 additional emails and web submissions that were referred to MyJax and 701 emails that were reviewed, assessed, and filed for intelligence. Our investigative activity identified close to 7 million dollars in unnecessary costs.

Our outreach program has significantly strengthened our partnership with the Mayor and the City Council. Both have shown consistent openness to our efforts to advance transparency and efficiency, recognizing the value of our independent oversight. Our recommendations for change and process improvement were predominantly accepted and implemented.

As the city expands, the demand for accountability will rise, and our office remains dedicated to ensuring that the citizens of this great city can trust their tax dollars are being spent appropriately.

Building public trust in government is a challenge our office faces daily with commitment and determination. Our mission is carried out by a dedicated team of professionals who embody our core values: integrity, accountability, objectivity, respect, and professionalism.

The OIG understands our mission is accomplished through collaboration and partnership with Jacksonville's consolidated government and its citizens. We are committed to strengthening these relationships while actively seeking opportunities to detect and prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.

Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to a productive and efficient new year.

Regards,

Matthew J. Lascell  
Inspector General  
Office of Inspector General

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# MISSION STATEMENT

**“ENHANCING PUBLIC TRUST IN GOVERNMENT THROUGH INDEPENDENT AND RESPONSIBLE OVERSIGHT.”**

Offices of Inspector General are entrusted with fostering and promoting accountability and integrity within government. The **Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the City of Jacksonville (COJ)** was created to provide independent oversight of publicly funded activities. Responsibilities include reviewing and evaluating internal controls to protect the resources of the entire Consolidated Government against waste, fraud, inefficiency, mismanagement, misconduct, and other abuses.

# VISION STATEMENT

To be the trusted oversight organization within Duval County, serving all citizens by promoting positive change and increased efficiency throughout the Consolidated Government.

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## CORE VALUES

**Integrity:** Our actions shall conform to high standards of ethical conduct and remain free from any financial, social, or other obligation that might influence the performance of our duties.

**Respect:** We are committed to treating all individuals with dignity and courtesy.

**Accountability:** Our commitment is to provide value-added service and accept full responsibility for our actions.

**Objectivity:** We are committed to remaining neutral and unbiased, relying on facts in the performance of our duties.

**Professionalism:** We are committed to our mission, demand excellence from ourselves, and comply with professional standards.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

*(Goals for Fiscal Years 2018-2025)*

**Goal 1:** Focus on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of government to ensure the Consolidated Government serves as a good steward of the funds provided by the citizens of Jacksonville.

**Goal 2:** Ensure effective and appropriate oversight of the procurement process throughout the Consolidated Government, from bid development through contract execution.

**Goal 3:** Conduct outreach to the Consolidated Government and the citizens of Jacksonville to solicit input on ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Consolidated Government while educating all stakeholders on our office.

**Goal 4:** Maintain a team of high performing experts in investigations, audits, and contract oversight through continuing education and professional certifications.

## OIG HISTORY

The Office of Inspector General began operations in October 2014 to provide independent oversight of publicly funded activities. Initially, oversight jurisdiction was limited to the City of Jacksonville (COJ) government and did not include the constitutional officers or independent agencies that also comprise the consolidated government.

Voters passed a Charter Referendum in March of 2015 to expand the OIG’s jurisdiction from the core City of Jacksonville departments, officials, and employees to include all the Consolidated Government, effective January 1, 2016.

## OVERSIGHT



### City Government:

- Office of the Mayor
- City Council
- All City Departments and Offices

### Constitutional Officers:

- Property Appraiser
- Supervisor of Elections
- Tax Collector
- JSO (Non-Sworn)
- Clerk of the Courts

### Independent Agencies and Authorities:

- JEA
- Jacksonville Transportation Authority
- Jacksonville Aviation Authority
- Jacksonville Port Authority
- Jacksonville Housing Authority
- Jacksonville Housing Finance Authority
- Jacksonville Health Facilities Authority
- Downtown Investment Authority
- Duval County School Board
- Kids Hope Alliance

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## FISCAL YEAR FUNDING

The Fiscal Year 2024 total approved budget was \$1,541,177: 90% for hiring, operating expenses, which includes training and supplies.

The approved budget for Fiscal Year 2025 (\$1,612,739) increased by \$71,562 due to an increase of additional funds for filling the Investigative Support Analyst position, and a de minimis increase in discretionary operating expenses.

The Office of Inspector General has oversight of \$7.9 billion\* and oversight of Consolidated Government employees, which includes employees of City Government, Constitutional Officers, and Independent Agencies.

\*Budget Information from the COJ Council Auditor’s Office Report #878, issued January 22, 2024. Employees of Duval County Schools were not included.

## OIG STAFF EXPERIENCE

To ensure success in accomplishing the mission of “*Enhancing Public Trust in Government Through Independent and Responsible Oversight*,” the OIG hires qualified individuals who not only reflect the diversity of the community but also have the appropriate level of skills, abilities, and experience necessary for their position on the OIG team. Staff members have backgrounds and academic degrees in investigations, law enforcement, auditing, public administration, and financial analysis. In addition, the OIG staff hold the following certifications and professional memberships:

### Certifications:

- Certified Inspector General
- Certified Inspector General Investigator
- Certified Inspector General Auditor
- Certified Government Auditing Professional
- Notary Public

### Professional Memberships

- Association of Inspector General (National Chapter)
- Association of Inspector General (Florida Chapter)
- Fraud Prevention Association
- National Institute of Government Procurement
- Institute of Internal Auditors
- Association of Certified Fraud Examiners

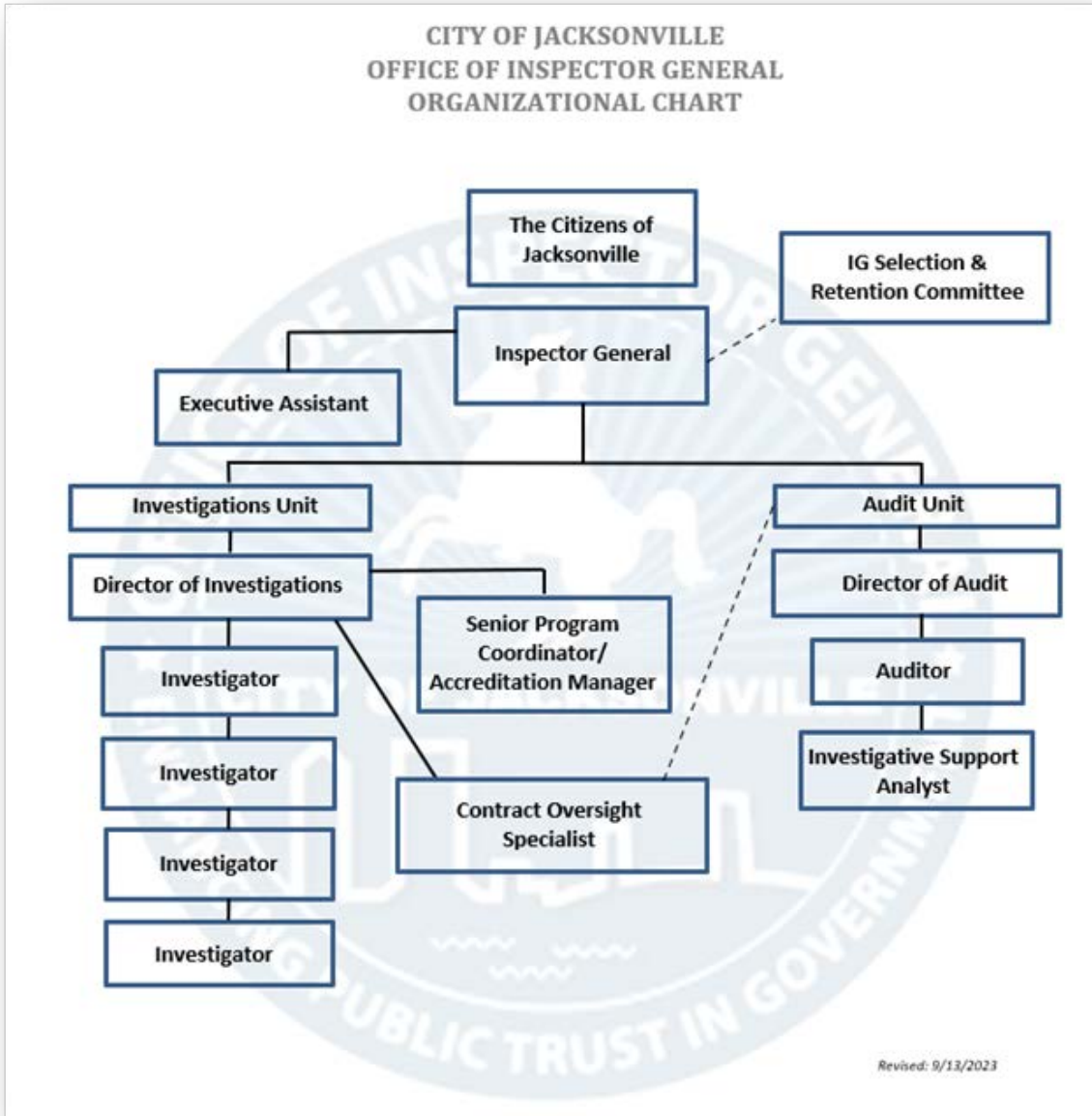
## INSPECTOR GENERAL SELECTION AND RETENTION COMMITTEE

Sec. 602.305, *Ordinance Code*, provides for the Inspector General (IG) selection by the Inspector General Selection and Retention Committee (Committee). This seven-member group is responsible for making decisions regarding the IG's retention and removal, providing guidance, direction, and support to the OIG. The Committee's IG selection is subject to confirmation by the City Council. The role of the Committee is set out in Sec. 602.305, *Ordinance Code*. The Committee's members are set forth as follows:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS	NAME	DESIGNEE
President of the Jacksonville City Council	Randy White <i>Ronald Salem (former)</i>	N/A
State Attorney of the Fourth Judicial Court	Honorable Melissa Nelson	Steven Siegel <i>L.E. Hutton, Chief Assistant State Attorney (former)</i>
Chair of the Jacksonville Ethics Commission	J.J. Dixon (CHAIR) <i>Ellen Schmitt (former)</i>	N/A
Chair of the Jacksonville TRUE Commission	Lieutenant Colonel Keshan Chambliss	N/A
Public Defender of the Fourth Judicial Court	Honorable Charlie Cofer	Owen Schmidt, Director of Circuit Court
Chief Judge of the Fourth Judicial Circuit	Honorable Chief Judge Day	Cecilia Birk, Court Counsel
Mayor of the City of Jacksonville	Honorable Donna Deegan	Karen Bowling, Chief Administrative Officer

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The OIG is currently comprised of the Investigations Unit and Audit Unit. The office is currently budgeted for 12 full-time positions. As of October 2, 2023, all 12 positions were filled.



## REPORTING POLICY

The OIG accepts complaints of potential fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement relating to the City of Jacksonville, its Constitutional Officers, its Independent Agencies and Authorities, and contractors/vendors doing business with the Consolidated Government. The information is reviewed and assessed for potential violation(s) of governing laws, rules, policies, and procedures to determine appropriate handling.



**Methods of reporting to the OIG are as follows:**

**Hotline:** (904) 255-5800

**Email:** [InspectorGeneral@coj.net](mailto:InspectorGeneral@coj.net)

**Web:** [www.jacksonville.gov/oig](http://www.jacksonville.gov/oig)

**Mail:** Office of Inspector General  
City of Jacksonville  
231 E. Forsyth Street, Suite 470  
Jacksonville, FL 32202

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## WHISTLE-BLOWER PROTECTION

The State of Florida's Whistle-blower's Act, Sections 112.3187 – 112.31895, *Florida Statutes*, protects current or former employees, applicants for employment, and independent contractor employees from retaliatory acts associated with the disclosure of:

- 1) any violation or suspected violation of any federal, state, or local law, rule, or regulation committed by an employee or agent of an agency or independent contractor that creates and presents a substantial and specific danger to the public's health, safety, or welfare; or
- 2) any act or suspected act of gross mismanagement, malfeasance, misfeasance, gross waste of public funds, suspected or actual Medicaid fraud or abuse, or gross neglect of duty committed by an employee or agent of an agency or independent contractor.

The City of Jacksonville also provides for whistle-blower protection in Part 5, Chapter 602, *Ordinance Code*. In addition to investigating whistle-blower allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse, the OIG is designated as an appropriate local official responsible for reviewing the allegations of persons seeking whistle-blower protection and granting or denying whistle-blower status.



## OUTREACH AND PREVENTION

The Office of Inspector General has energized the Outreach Program to increase awareness of its mission and promote honesty, accountability, and efficiency throughout the City of Jacksonville. Since Inspector General Lascell’s appointment in March 2022, the OIG has put a strong emphasis on outreach presentations and ensures attendees are aware of their role in deterring, detecting, and disclosing wrongdoing and mismanagement whether they are an employee, former employee, vendor/contractor, or member of the public.

The OIG has presented to:

- City of Jacksonville (COJ) Departments and Offices
- COJ New Employee Orientation (continuous)
- Independent Agencies and Authorities
- Florida State Agencies and Departments
- Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, Sheriff’s Watch
- Local colleges
- DCPS School Board Working Group
- Fraud Prevention Association
- Boards and Commissions CPAC - Greater Arlington Beaches
- North Florida Consumer Council
- US Attorney, Middle District of FL
- Palm Beach County OIG
- Miami-Dade County OIG
- 4th Judicial District State Attorney
  - Southeast District
  - Southwest District
  - Northwest District
  - North District
  - Urban Core

In 2024, the OIG conducted outreach with:

- TRUE Commission
- Chamber of Commerce
- Risk Management Division
- Office of the Ombudsman
- Chief of Procurement
- Florida Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General
- Human Rights Commission
- Office of Consumer Affairs



**REPORT FRAUD, WASTE, & ABUSE**

City of Jacksonville  
Office of Inspector General  
**HOTLINE**  
(904) 255-5800  
InspectorGeneral@coj.net

**What to Report:**

- Violations of COJ policies and procedures
- Theft and misuse of government property
- Contract, procurement, and grant fraud
- Mismanagement and waste of funds

**How to Report:**

- **CALL THE HOTLINE**  
(904) 255-5800
- **SEND AN EMAIL**  
InspectorGeneral@coj.net
- **FILL OUT FORM ONLINE**  
coj.net/OIG
- **MAIL OR FAX A WRITTEN COMPLAINT**  
City of Jacksonville  
Office of Inspector General  
231 E. Forsyth Street  
Suite 470  
Jacksonville, FL 32202  
Fax: (904) 255-5813

**SPEAK UP!**  
YOUR VOICE MATTERS.

Follow us on social at [twitter.com/OIGCOJ](https://twitter.com/OIGCOJ)

Scan me

The OIG will continue to focus on outreach to ensure all City of Jacksonville employees, Independent Agencies and Authorities, and the citizens of Jacksonville are familiar with our policies and programs.

## INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

The Investigations Unit conducts and coordinates investigations to detect, deter, prevent, and eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse within the Consolidated Government. OIG investigations are undertaken to resolve allegations of violations of Florida Statutes, the Ordinance Code, and Consolidated Government policies, rules, and directives.

The Investigations Unit conducts investigations involving Consolidated Government officials, employees (excluding sworn personnel), vendors, contractors, or consultants doing business with the Consolidated Government.

Investigations may be initiated because of information received from employees of the Consolidated Government, private citizens, local, state, or federal agencies, or through the OIGs' or other agencies' hotlines.

The Investigations Unit refers all potential criminal violations to the appropriate local, state, and federal authorities. It works closely with the Office of the State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit and the United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida.

Investigations are conducted in accordance with the *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General* (Green Book) as developed and approved by the Association of Inspectors General. These principles are essential, as they guide the quality of investigations.

The Investigations Unit issued eight investigative reports during Fiscal Year 2024 and referred 10 cases to law enforcement. Please see the highlighted summaries below.

### Utility Assistance Program

In an effort to detect and deter wasteful expenditure of government funds, the OIG initiated a review of the Jacksonville Housing (JH) Utility Assistance program. Per the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the program is also known as Utility Reimbursement Payments (URP). Funding for the program comes from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The OIG obtained account data for the URP from JH and then contacted the card service provider, ONBE. ONBE is a program manager who issues payments and manages payment programs for corporate clients and government entities. ONBE issues payments through affiliated banks to facilitate a wide variety of payment programs. A representative supplied the total amount allocated for the URP and the percentage of those dollars spent by JH tenants on utilities between October 31, 2022, and October 31, 2023.

During that period, \$1,990,166.21 was loaded onto 1,634 JH tenant URP cards which can be used as ATM cards. ONBE data revealed that only 13.49% (\$268,473.42) of the funds were spent on

utilities. \$1,721,692.79 of those expenditures were unrelated to utilities. ONBE explained that the cards could be programmed exclusively for utilities. Additionally, the funds could be paid directly to JEA.

## **Allegations of Overtime Fraud**

The OIG initiated an investigation regarding the alleged falsification of overtime hours by City of Jacksonville Solid Waste employees. According to allegations, several Solid Waste employees had falsely claimed more overtime hours than they worked.

Investigation revealed that multiple Solid Waste employees received over \$50,000 in overtime pay between October 1, 2022, and October 31, 2023. While the OIG did not find sufficient evidence to substantiate allegations of fraud, it also could not validate the overtime hours due to the lack of required documentation.

## **Failure to Conduct Background Checks**

The OIG investigated alleged improprieties by Families of Slain Children Incorporated (FOSCI), a non-profit organization contracted through Kids Hope Alliance. During the investigation, the OIG learned several FOSCI employees were deemed Not Eligible for DCF Child Care based on their background checks. As a result, they should have been disqualified from employment for childcare per the DCF Child Care Licensing Program.

The OIG discovered two FOSCI employees under the College and Career Development Program were deemed Not Eligible, and one FOSCI employee was deemed N/A for DCF Child Care. It was also discovered three FOSCI employees under the Family Stability Program were deemed Not Eligible for DCF Child Care.

## **Internal Control Oversight**

The OIG initiated an investigation regarding City of Jacksonville purchasing card (also referred to as P-Card) transactions for the Supervisor of the Elections (SOE) in accordance with §602.303, City of Jacksonville (COJ) Ordinance Code.

The investigation revealed that an SOE employee with an issued P-card amassed over \$138,000 in questionable transactions with no corresponding receipts over the last several years. According to SOE officials, the former SOE should have approved these transactions with receipts and then have them approved by the COJ Finance and Administration Department.

## Discovered Costs

The total costs that the OIG Investigations Unit discovered during FY24 are as follows:

- Identified Costs: **\$2,264,490.15**
- Questionable Costs: **\$2,689,062.09**
- Recovered Costs: **\$38,332.00**
- Avoidable Costs: **\$1,721,692.79**
- **Total: \$6,713,577.03**

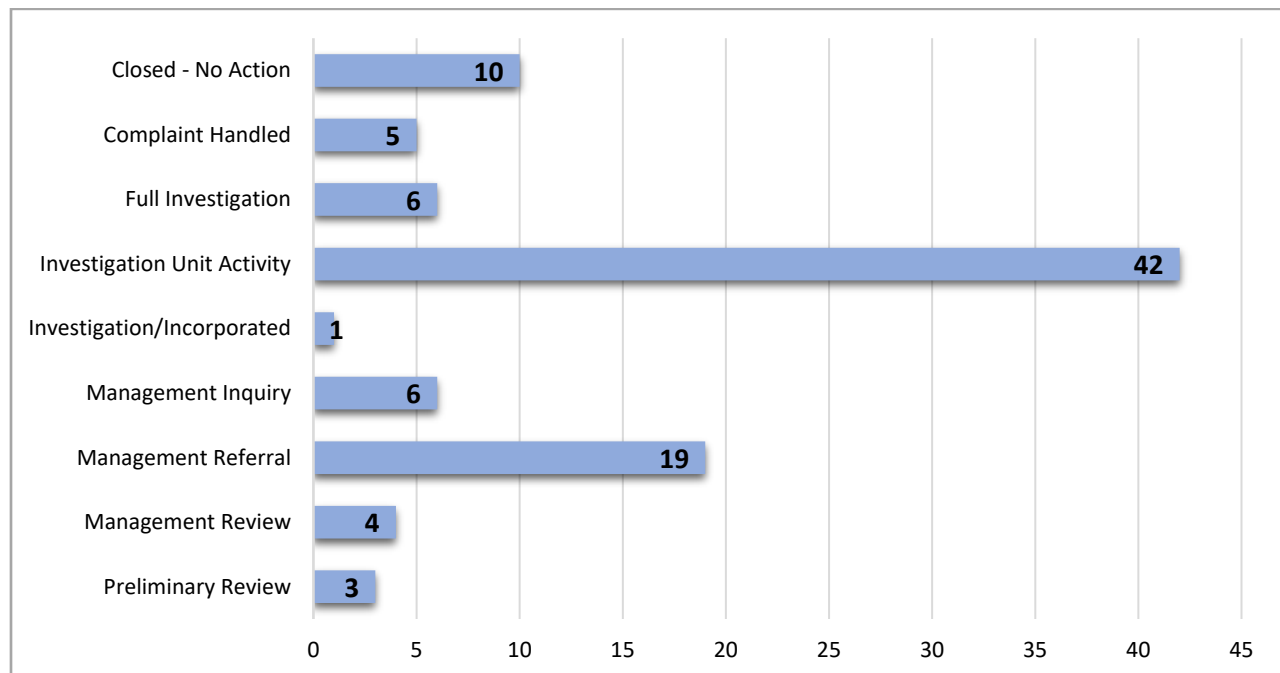
## Complaints

The term **complaint** refers to any accusation of a specific violation of any law, rule, policy, or procedure against any Consolidated Government or Independent Agency and Authority employee or a contractor/sub-contractor employee, made either verbally or in writing, by a citizen, employee, or anonymous source.

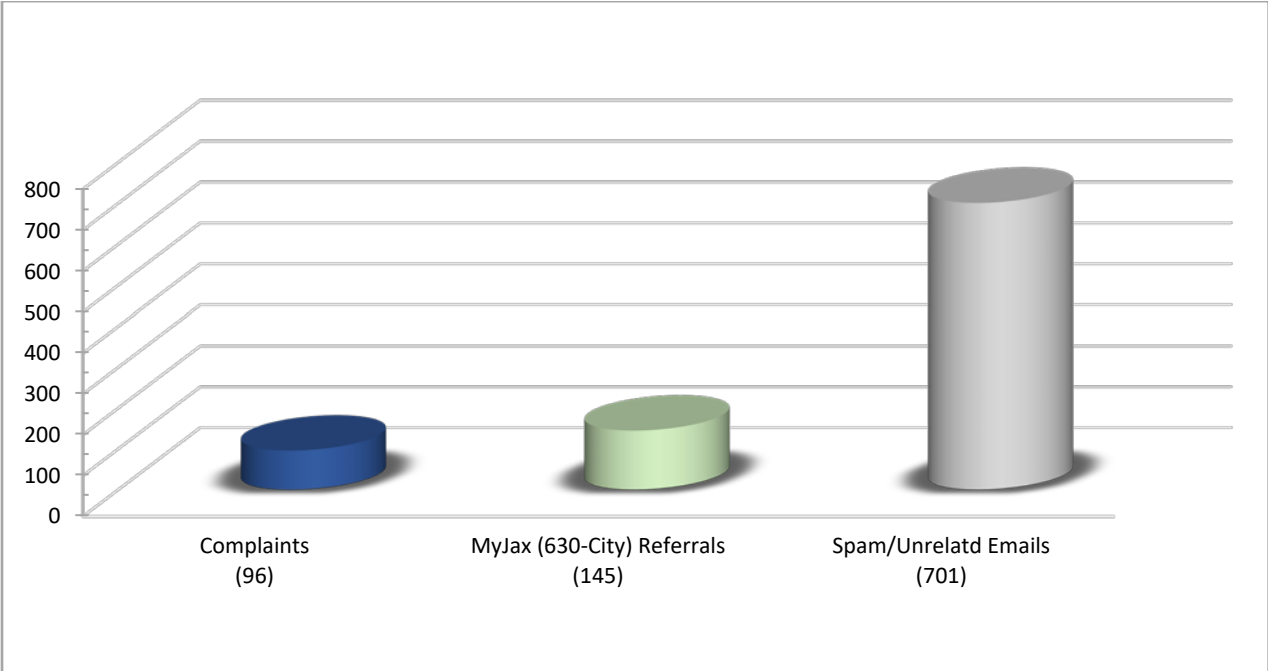
During Fiscal Year 2024, the Office of Inspector General:

- received a total of 96 complaints that were open for review and closed with dispositions;
- received 145 additional emails and web submissions that were referred to MyJax; and
- received 701 emails that were reviewed, assessed, and filed for intelligence.

## Dispositions:



**Intake Overview:**



# AUDIT UNIT

## What the Office of Inspector General's Audit Unit Does

The Audit Unit plays a vital role in supporting this OIG's mission. The Audit Unit accomplishes this by delivering independent and objective assurance and consulting services that enhance the operations of the City. The Audit Unit focuses on strengthening risk management, control, and governance processes through a systematic and disciplined approach. Every aspect of its work is carried out with integrity, objectivity, confidentiality, and professionalism.

## Last Year's Accomplishments

The Audit Unit had an exceptionally productive year. Highlights included the Deputy Inspector General for Audit earning the Certified Fraud Examiner accreditation and the Investigative Support Specialist achieving the Certified Inspector General Auditor certification. Beyond the Unit's critical roles in providing investigative support and data analysis, the team also published the following six comprehensive reports:

### **Career Development Program Audit**

**Purpose:** The Audit Unit audited the City's Career Development Program (CDP), which reimburses tuition for eligible employees. The review focused on compliance with the program's policies and the City's Ordinance Code for reimbursements from Fall 2020 to Fall 2023. It also assessed documentation, payment accuracy and timeliness, and employee repayment for early departures.

**Findings:** Tuition reimbursements were generally timely and accurate, but issues with CDP's record-keeping raised concerns about potential improper payments and missed repayments. Key findings include:

- 10.5% of reimbursements lacked required documentation.
- 26.9% of reimbursements were not properly recorded in CDP's system.
- Of the five employees who left City employment, repayment status was unclear for three due to insufficient records.

### **Keeping Families Together Public Service Grant Funding Audit**

**Purpose:** The Audit Unit audited Family Support Services of North Florida's (FSSNF) Keeping Families Together program to evaluate compliance with the City contract terms, municipal ordinances, and delivery of proposed outcomes. This aligned with the OIG's focus on the use of Public Service Grant funds.

**Findings:** FSSNF complied with COJ contract terms and delivered promised services. While reimbursement submissions were delayed, this did not lead to improper payments or negatively impact the City. However, such delays could have affected FSSNF's program operations.

### **Oceanfront Parks' Admission Cash Handling Audit**

**Purpose:** The Audit Unit reviewed operations at Kathryn Abbey Hanna Park and Huguenot Memorial Park for compliance with their cash handling policies. The audit analyzed cash reports, credit reports, count sheets, and verification memos for 58 days in Fiscal Year 2022-2023.

**Findings:** Hanna and Huguenot Parks demonstrated strong internal controls over admission fee handling. Of 58 days of verification memos at each park, only one was missing at Hanna, and one at Huguenot, the latter was irretrievably damaged by hurricane flooding.

### **Sunshine Law Compliance Review**

**Purpose:** The City's ordinance code requires the OIG to conduct a biannual review to ensure City Council public meetings comply with state and local "Government in the Sunshine" laws. It also mandates that City Council members and their Executive Assistants (ECA) complete an annual ethics training.

**Findings:** The Audit Unit found that the City Council complied with state and local Sunshine laws. All 243 sampled meetings had proper notices, were held in appropriate locations, and included required meeting minutes. However, the Audit Unit could not verify if one ECA completed the required ethics training, as there was no record of completion was available.

### **Office of Public Parking DAVID Compliance and Control Measures Attestation**

**Purpose:** The City's Office of Public Parking requested the OIG review its use of the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles' (FLHSMV) DAVID system, as required by their MOU. The review assessed whether Public Parking had sufficient internal controls to protect DAVID's personal identification data from unauthorized access or misuse.

**Findings:** The Audit found that Public Parking had effective security measures to protect FLHSMV data. However, it identified areas for improvement in adhering to MOU requirements, specifically regarding the prompt removal of employee access upon termination or transfer, as well as the timely submission of quarterly reports and annual certifications.

### **Property Appraiser's Office DAVID Compliance and Control Measures Attestation**

**Purpose:** The Duval County Property Appraiser's Office requested the OIG review its use of the FLHSMV's DAVID system, as required by their MOU. The review aimed to assess whether the Property Appraiser has sufficient internal controls to protect personal identity data in DAVID from unauthorized access or misuse.

**Findings:** The Audit found that the Property Appraiser had effective security measures to protect FLHSMV data. However, it was noted that the Property Appraiser did not audit enough users in 2022 and part of 2023. This issue had already been addressed by the time of the engagement.

## This Year's Priorities

The Audit Unit has published its Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Audit Plan, as required by the *International Professional Practices Framework*. The plan identifies key projects based on a risk assessment of potential impacts on the City's objectives; however, it may be adjusted due to unforeseen circumstances. This year's plan includes the following engagements:

Project	Summary
<p><b>Opioid and Substance Use Disorder Grants Committee's Opioid Settlement Proceeds Grants Program</b></p>	<p>The Opioid Settlement Proceeds Grants Program (OSPG) manages funds the City received from lawsuits against opioid manufacturers and distributors. Its goal is to allocate resources to local organizations focused on prevention, treatment, and recovery for those impacted by opioid abuse.</p> <p>This year, OSPG plans to distribute nearly \$5 million in grants, with a volunteer committee overseeing the selection process. The Audit Unit prioritized this area due to the significant funds and the sensitive nature of substance abuse and healthcare.</p>
<p><b>Jacksonville Main Library's Rental Fees and Procedures</b></p>	<p>The downtown public library is a 300,000-square-foot facility offering traditional services and hosting after-hours events that generate revenue and attract hundreds of attendees and multiple vendors annually.</p> <p>Despite the scale, the rental program is managed by only a few employees who oversee the rental income and library assets. The Audit Unit selected this program for review due to its size, limited staffing, and revenue generated.</p>
<p><b>Animal Care and Protective Services's Animal Ordinance Enforcement</b></p>	<p>The Animal Care and Protective Services Division (ACPS) of the Neighborhoods Department enforces state and local animal laws by investigating complaints, issuing citations, and impounding animals when necessary. Impounded animals may be reunited with owners, adopted, sterilized, or euthanized. Given the importance of these services to public welfare and vulnerable animals, the Audit Unit chose to review how the enforcement process was functioning.</p>
<p><b>Parks Department's Youth Camp Program Fees and Procedures</b></p>	<p>The Park's Department manages youth programs, including summer camps and after-school activities, generating nearly half a million dollars annually. Some families can attend for free through financial vouchers distributed via a lottery system. The Audit Unit will review these programs due to the significant revenue and the vulnerability of the children involved.</p>
<p><b>Audit Policy and Procedures Manual</b></p>	<p>The OIG has implemented a new case management system, Kaseware, to create, track, and store audit records. Consequently, the Audit Unit's Procedure manual will need to be updated.</p>





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**City of Jacksonville**  
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