

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor



Chris Ryer
Director

February 9, 2024

Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General
City Hall, Suite 635
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

Re: OIG Case # 23-0030-I

Dear Inspector General Cumming:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to OIG Case # 23-0030-I. The Scott Administration appreciates the report's finding that there was no evidence to support the allegation of a lack of process and communication regarding the [REDACTED] grantee selection process. In addition, we thank the OIG for reinforcing that quick compliance actions were taken by the Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs (MORP) the Department of Planning (DOP) and the Baltimore Civic Fund once issues with the grantee were identified.

Baltimore City was awarded \$641 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. The Scott Administration has prioritized the use of this once in a generation level of funding to address historical inequities and prioritize underserved communities and populations. In addition, this funding has been used to provide organizations that typically do not have access to such federal grant funding with an opportunity to participate and contribute to the city's recovery from the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. These organizations have various levels of federal grants management experience and internal controls. Accordingly, city agencies that are partnering with these organizations have developed robust training and monitoring processes and procedures to ensure compliance and to minimize the risk of waste, fraud and abuse.

The OIG report was useful in providing additional information and insight into [REDACTED] misuse of ARPA funds granted for activities related to [REDACTED] program. As noted in the report, the reconciliation of [REDACTED] expenses conducted by the Civic Fund determined that [REDACTED] appropriately spent \$285,298.80 of the advanced grant funds of \$414,477.50.

In an email sent on July 17, 2023, the Civic Fund notified [REDACTED] that a balance of \$129,178.70 must be returned to the Civic Fund, as this portion of the advanced funds could not adequately be substantiated as having been expended in furtherance of approved [REDACTED] activities. Since then, [REDACTED] has consistently communicated that the organization does not have funding to repay the balance owed. However, the Civic Fund is continuing their efforts to recoup the outstanding balance. [REDACTED] misuse of federal grant funds is a serious matter that cannot be overlooked. The Civic Fund requires that the balance owed be paid in full or the Civic Fund reserves the right to take additional enforcement actions.

If you have any questions about the information contained in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me at Chris.Ryer@baltimorecity.gov.

Sincerely,



Chris Ryer
Director

City of Baltimore | Department of Planning
417 E. Fayette St., 8th Floor | Baltimore, MD 21202

cc: Honorable Brandon M. Scott, Mayor
Marvin James, Chief of Staff
Honorable Ebony M. Thompson, Acting City Solicitor
Faith P. Leach, Chief Administrative Officer
Simone C. Johnson, Deputy City Administrator
Shamiah Kerney, Director of Mayor's Office of Recovery
Nichole Stewart, Assistant Director of Planning