

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
CITY OF BALTIMORE



Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

Investigative
Report Synopsis

OIG Case #22-0030-I

Issued: November 19, 2024



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
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November 19, 2024

Dear Citizens of Baltimore City,

The mission of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is to promote accountability, efficiency, and integrity in City government, as well as to investigate complaints of fraud, financial waste, and abuse. The following synopsis is a condensed version of a complaint presented to the OIG and the actions taken by City of Baltimore (City) management officials.

The OIG received numerous complaints regarding the Safe Streets program and learned that MONSE and their contractors included fictitious employees on the Board of Estimates (BOE) contract approval documentation.

Background

MONSE is responsible for implementing the City's public health approach to safety through the Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan. Since its inception in 2007, Safe Streets has changed its program oversight from the Baltimore City Health Department to the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) and then to MONSE in 2020. Safe Streets partners with Community-based organizations (CBOs) to develop and implement strategies to reduce and prevent violence, particularly shootings and killings. Currently, Safe Streets has ten (10) sites that serve the residents in designated zones across the City. These ten (10) Safe Streets sites collectively cover a total 2.6 square miles in the City. The City has approximately 80 square miles in land area. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 (FY22), there were eight (8) CBOs administering the ten sites. Currently, two CBOs administer the 10 Safe Streets sites.

The City's FY22 began on July 1, 2021, and ended on June 30, 2022. The CBOs receive payment from the City on a reimbursement basis and do not receive the contract award money upfront. They must submit invoices showing their expenses and payroll information before receiving payment.

The BOE is responsible for awarding contracts and supervising all purchasing by the City and consists of five voting members: The Mayor, the President of the City Council, the Comptroller, the City Solicitor, and the Director of Public Works. As a part of the BOE contract approval process, the Department of Audits (Audits) is responsible for reviewing grant awards and sub-grantee awards, change orders, or proposals submitted by agencies to the BOE to verify compliance with city policies.

FY22 VIPP Hospital Responder Contract Communications

In June 2022, MONSE was working to finalize a Hospital Responder Contractor's (Hospital Contractor) FY22 contract to pay the invoices that were incurred from July 1, 2021, to June 2022. MONSE was in the process of getting the FY22 contract approved in the final few weeks of the fiscal year. It appears that the Hospital Contractor had been performing work without an executed contract.

On June 6, 2022, a MONSE employee (MONSE Employee 1) notified several Hospital Contractor

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employees that they had received feedback regarding Audits' review of the FY22 VIPP Hospital Responder Contract. MONSE Employee 1 stated they needed Contractor 1 to include an employee name for a vacant hospital responder position. The Hospital Contractor replied that they wanted to hire a candidate to fill that role but did not receive any other applicants from MONSE or staff at the site. Later that day, MONSE Employee 1 informed Contractor 1 that "off the record, neither MONSE nor the audits team will verify the individual, so we really just need a name that doesn't sound fictional. If we remove the position, we will need to revamp the budget and time is of the essence".

The Hospital Contractor provided MONSE Employee 1 with a potential name that was entered for the vacant position. The BOE then approved the contract with the updated name included as a hospital responder with a budgeted salary of \$37,850. The OIG reviewed the Hospital Contractor's invoices in Workday, the City's financial and human resource management system, but they did not contain employee payroll information and supporting documentation.

FY22 Safe Streets Contracts

The OIG reviewed multiple FY22 Safe Streets contracts that contained email correspondence regarding vacant positions and inputting "made up" employee names:

- 1) Safe Streets Contractor 1 – A second MONSE employee (MONSE Employee 2) contacted Safe Streets Contractor 1 and discussed their proposed FY22 budget. MONSE Employee 2 requested that Safe Streets Contractor 1 "enter names in the vacant positions. They can be made up, they just cannot be position titles alone or empty".
- 2) Safe Streets Contractor 2 - MONSE Employee 2 requested for Safe Streets Contractor 2's proposed FY22 budget that they "enter names in the vacant positions. They can be made up, they just cannot be position titles alone or empty." Safe Streets Contractor 2 then returned the contract with two (2) names in the vacant positions. The budgeted salary amounts for the 2 names in the executed contract were left blank.
- 3) Safe Streets Contractor 3 – An Audits employee (Audits Employee 1) returned Safe Streets Contractor 3's FY22 contract budget to MONSE Employee 1 in February 2022 and stated they could not accept an agreement with vacant positions on salary and budget pages. Additionally, the Audits Employee noted that the contract began on July 1, 2021, leaving time to fill the positions. MONSE Employee 1 replied approximately two weeks later with an updated budget. Two employee names were added with a combined budgeted salary of \$46,666.66 in the executed contract.

FY23 Safe Streets Contract Communications

The OIG reviewed correspondence between personnel from MONSE, another Safe Streets Contractor (Safe Streets Contractor 4), and Audits that discussed including employee names in the BOE contract documentation:

- On October 5th, 2022, at 11:42 a.m. MONSE Employee 1 received an email from an Audits employee (Audits Employee 2). In that email, Audits Employee 2 requested that Safe Streets

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Contractor 4’s budget information be updated to include employee names instead of “TBD”.

- At 12:41 p.m. MONSE Employee 1 emailed Safe Streets Contractor 4 detailing Audits Employee 2’s request concerning the FY23 contract budget for two (2) sites. MONSE Employee 1 told Safe Streets Contractor 4 that Audits would not approve the contract with “TBH”¹ in the employee names field. MONSE Employee 1 also said, “Any name can be listed as long as it isn’t the repeat of another staff member.”
- At 2:27 p.m., Safe Streets Contractor 4 sent an email to MONSE Employee 1 with the updated contract budgets and the names for each position.
- At 2:53 p.m. MONSE Employee 1 emailed Audits Employee 2 with the updated contract information that they received from Safe Streets Contractor 4.

BOE documentation shows that Audits approved the contracts for the two (2) sites in October 2022. The updated budget information replaced “TBD” with names believed to be fictitious. The BOE approved the contract with those names in November 2022.

Review of Possible Fictitious Names

The OIG conducted a review of CBO employees listed on BOE approval documentation. Personal identifiable information (PII) is not included in the contract documents due to privacy reasons. The OIG identified 26 potentially fictitious employee names listed on the BOE approval documentation. Utilizing various investigative methods to verify the existence of these listed employees, the OIG did not find any relevant results for nine (9) employees. Those nine employees were budgeted for \$285,000 over various contracts. Some of the nine employees unable to be verified are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: List of employee names without records to support existence

Employee Name	Contract Year	Budgeted Position	Budgeted Salary
Allen Iverson	FY22	Violence Prevention Coordinator	\$45,000
Joseph Bynes II	FY23	Violence Interrupter	\$30,000
Lemur Jackson II	FY23	Violence Interrupter	\$31,667
Merlin Humphrey II	FY23	Violence Interrupter	\$33,333
Rodney Bateman II	FY23	Violence Interrupter	\$31,667
Susanne Smith II	FY23-25	Site Supervisor	\$12,500*
Troy Smith II	FY23-FY25	Lead Violence Interrupter	\$11,250*

**Total Budgeted for FY23 only*

The investigative search methods yielded results for the 17 other names reviewed, but some results do not show these individuals residing in the Baltimore area. The OIG reviewed the available Safe Streets invoice documentation and did not see any of the 26 employee names listed in the CBO’s request for payment. It is important to note that some of the invoices in Workday did not contain supporting documentation with employee names.

¹This could be inferred to mean “to be hired.”

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Review of FY22 Budgets, Available Invoices, and BOE Approval Dates

Based on the available financial records for FY22, only one (1) Safe Streets site appeared to exceed its initially budgeted salary line item. That site exceeded its salary line item but was only funded for six months and underspent its total overall budget amount.

The FY22 contracts were all approved by the BOE approximately eight (8) to nine (9) months after their start date. It is worth noting that the City appeared to receive the State of Maryland's official approval letter for the grant award in June 2021, shortly before the contract performance period began.

Table 2: Site's contract start, end, and BOE approval dates

<u>Site</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>End Date</u>	<u>BOE Approval Date</u>
Belair-Edison	7/1/2021	6/30/2022	3/16/2022
Belvedere	7/1/2021	6/30/2022	4/6/2022
Brooklyn	7/1/2021	6/30/2022	3/16/2022
Cherry Hill	7/1/2021	6/30/2022	4/6/2022
Franklin Square	7/1/2021	6/30/2022	4/6/2022
McElderry	7/1/2021	6/30/2022	4/6/2022
Park Heights	7/1/2021	6/30/2022	3/16/22
Penn North	7/1/2021	6/30/2022	3/16/2022
Sandtown	7/1/2021	6/30/2022	3/16/2022
Woodborne-McCabe	7/1/2021	12/31/2021	3/2/2022
FY 23 Brooklyn/Sandtown	7/1/2022	6/30/2023	11/16/2022
FY 23 - FY 25 Brooklyn/Sandtown	7/1/2022	6/30/2025	6/28/2023

Investigative Findings

MONSE employees sent multiple emails to contractors that appeared to encourage the use of fake employee names for contracts submitted and later approved by the BOE. The OIG identified 26 names that may not be valid. The investigation could not find any relevant records to support the existence of nine (9) employee names. The OIG turned the information found over to law enforcement for potential further investigation.

Based on the evidence gathered and the difficulty of verifying employee authenticity without PII for the potentially fictitious employees, the OIG requested that MONSE review the entire list of employees listed in the contract budgets and verify their authenticity with the contractors.

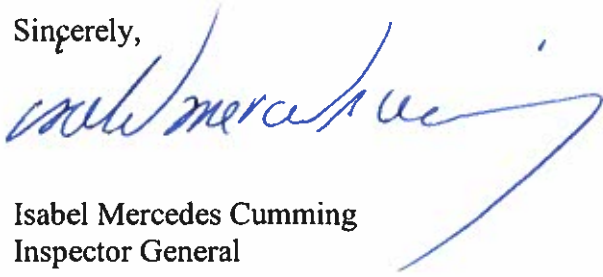
Further, the OIG recommended that MONSE and Audits meet to review the best practice for submitting contracts to the BOE when vacant positions are present.

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Sincerely,



Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

CC: Hon. Brandon M. Scott, Mayor of Baltimore City
Hon. Nick Mosby, Baltimore City Council President
Hon. Bill Henry, Baltimore City Comptroller
Honorable Members of the Baltimore City Council
Hon. Ebony Thompson, Baltimore City Solicitor

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