From: Boughal, Ethan (SAO)
To: Gross, Carol (SAO)
Subject: RE: Hotline Submission
Date: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 11:48:00 AM
Attachments: image001.png
image002.png

Thanks, Carol

Ethan Boughal, CPA
Assistant State Auditor, Office of the Washington State Auditor
(564) 464-5008 | www.sao.wa.gov
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From: Gross, Carol (SAO) <grossc@sao.wa.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 11:39 AM
To: Jgunth@hotmail.com
Cc: Boughal, Ethan (SAO) <ethan.boughal@sao.wa.gov>
Subject: RE: Hotline Submission

Hi Julie,
I'm stepping in to assist Ethan as technically he is tasked with addressing hotline submissions and this case has been closed in our hotline database. As Ethan mentioned, our Special Investigations team received your loss reported submitted last night and it is currently under review. Once reviewed, you will receive an email stating how SAO has triaged the case and any next steps.

We did meet with OSPI and we reviewed their internal desk manual that outlined their revised conflict check procedures. As it sounds like you already have an ongoing investigation and open public records requests with OSPI, I would think you could obtain the document directly from OSPI. To obtain it from SAO, you would need to submit a public records request.

When planning audits, the auditors always review open and closed hotline and fraud submissions to determine if there is risk that should be addressed in the audit. The auditors for the next OSPI audit will definitely review your submissions and if selected for audit, they would perform follow up procedures to make sure that OSPI has fully implemented their revisions and there are no ethics-related concerns.

Thank you for submitting your concerns to our office!

Carol Gross, MBA, CFE
Audit Manager, Office of the Washington State Auditor
(564) 999-0897 | Pronouns: She/Her/Hers
Keeping Washington rooted in #GoodGovernment since 1889: sao.wa.gov/rooted.

From: julie gunter <jgunth@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 11:01 AM
To: Boughal, Ethan (SAO) <ethan.boughal@sao.wa.gov>
Subject: Re: Hotline Submission

External Email

Hi,

The RFQ referenced in the 10/9 email was withdrawn per Tania May's update at the SEAC meeting this morning. OSPI decided to hire in-house investigators at this time.

My question is specific to the first bullet point, however. What documentation is being referred to that SAO analyzed to arrive at the understanding "that OSPI has already made the following improvements to their processes: Revised their practices internally, including conflict check procedures?"

Did SAO review the claimed revisions, including "conflict check procedures," or was the decision to close the item based on OSPI's statement that this did or would happen without providing documentation of same?

I am asking because in OSPI's response to the complaint I filed against OSPI (that OSPI assigned an OSPI-employed investigator to investigate), SECC 24-115, there is mention of need for improvement and language revision for conflict check process, but I am not seeing any evidence of the establishment of a formal conflict check procedure that OSPI has said was developed. As OSPI Asst. Director Alyssa Fairbanks admitted per internal emails inspected though public record installments (sent as attachments yesterday), there was no such formal procedure in place previously, so I'm confused what SAO was referring to that was reviewed that resulted in SAO's "understanding that OSPI has already made the following improvements to their processes" and closing of the item. Can you help me understand what documents or communication that understanding was based on and am I able to also review the documentation as well or do I need to make a public record request to do so?

Finally, will there be follow-up to and monitoring of these ethics-related concerns at some point in the future, such as for the next audit?

Thanks,
Julie

From: Boughal, Ethan (SAO) <ethan.boughal@sao.wa.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 10:02 AM
To: julie gunter <jgunth@hotmail.com>
Subject: RE: Hotline Submission

Sure!

What is the clarifying question?

Thanks,

Ethan Boughal, CPA

Assistant State Auditor, Office of the Washington State Auditor

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From: julie gunter <jgunth@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 9:30 AM
To: Boughal, Ethan (SAO) <ethan.boughal@sao.wa.gov>
Subject: Re: Hotline Submission

External Email

Hi,

I also have a question about the information communicated on 10/9. Am I able to ask a clarifying question about that communication?

Julie

From: Boughal, Ethan (SAO) <ethan.boughal@sao.wa.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 9:11 AM
To: julie gunter <jgunth@hotmail.com>
Subject: RE: Hotline Submission

Hi Julie,

Thank you for reaching out and letting me know my number is not working…odd. I will submit a ticket to our IT department and have them get right on that.

I see that you submitted a fraud report. This was sent directly to the fraud specialist team and you should hear back from them within a week or so.

Thanks,

Ethan Boughal, CPA

Assistant State Auditor, Office of the Washington State Auditor

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From: julie gunter <jgunth@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 8:14 AM
To: Boughal, Ethan (SAO) <ethan.boughal@sao.wa.gov>
Subject: Re: Hotline Submission

External Email

Hello,

I have a question about what was communicated below. Can you please let me know how and who I can reach out to within SAO to direct this question to?

Also, just FYI, the phone number doesn't appear to be working.

Thanks,

Julie

From: Boughal, Ethan (SAO) <ethan.boughal@sao.wa.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 9, 2024 10:32 AM
To: julie gunter <jgunth@hotmail.com>
Subject: Hotline Submission

Dear Julie:

Thank you for contacting the State Auditor's Office Citizen Hotline with your concerns regarding OSPI. In your referral, you expressed concern that there was a potential conflict of interest involving a contract OSPI manages.

We take our job of holding government accountable for the use of public resources seriously, and we have carefully considered the information you shared in your hotline submission. We reviewed the documents you sent, and we also met with OSPI to gain additional information about their conflict of interest review processes and the current status of the contract and employment status of the contractor in question. After performing this analysis, we understand that OSPI has already made the following improvements to their processes:

- Revised their practices internally, including conflict check procedures.
- Updated and added language around conflicts to their requests for qualifications (RFQs) and contracts.

We now consider this item closed. If you have additional concerns in the future, please enter a new report through our online referral system.

The hotline ID# is H-24-438.

Sincerely,

Ethan Boughal, CPA

Assistant State Auditor, Office of the Washington State Auditor

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