

Prince George's County Office of Ethics and Accountability - Quality Review

Period of July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2018

Issued June 30, 2019

Executive Summary



QUALITY, COMPLIANCE & MANAGEMENT CONSULTING, INC.

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Quality, Compliance & Management Consulting, Inc. (QCM) was contracted to perform a Quality Review of the Prince George's County Office of Ethics and Accountability (OEA) cases. The scope of the Quality Review included a check of the operations, staff and an on-site examination of procedures and a random sample of hard-copy files for ethics-related cases between fiscal years 2014-2018. The paper files were reviewed to confirm:

- Proper Case type assignment (per procedures)
- Appropriate process conducted (per documented procedures)
- Correct and complete objective evidence in hardcopy files

QCM reviewed the structure, personnel and processes in place to assess the conduct of its investigation/oversight mandate. Based on a random sampling of case files, QCM determined that OEA has the systems, processes and data to demonstrate it is upholding its mission to provide increased accountability and oversight in County Government.

In 2014, the County Council for Prince George's passed legislation to create the Office of Ethics and Accountability to provide increased accountability and oversight of operations of the County Government by identifying fraud, abuse, and illegal acts in County government operations. Starting as an office of one (1), OEA has grown and is now staffed with a credentialed team of six personnel that have developed the necessary systems to effectively record, process, investigate and manage cases with appropriate separation of activities. The workload of OEA has significantly increased (over 600%) since its inception, as demonstrated by the increasing number of cases over the period 2014-2018 (73 cases to 459 cases respectively – see Figure 1). Case files (only paper files were reviewed) are secured with limited access, maintained by 'type of case' and with a unique numbering system allowing for easy retrieval. An online repository of records exists in addition to the paper files.

Fiscal Year	Total Cases (Population)	% Change	Sampled Cases (95% Confidence Level)
2014	73		5
2015	205	181%	16
2016	173	-16%	13
2017	251	45%	20
2018	459	83%	35
Total	1,161		89

FIGURE 1 – TOTAL CASE POPULATION & SAMPLING FOR (CASE WORKLOAD) DURING FY 2014-FY 2018

The Quality Review was conducted on a sample of files (based on 95% confidence level and 10% confidence interval) from a total case load of 1,161 cases. The composite of the sample collected (89 files) reflected a mix of the types of cases received by the office – investigations (46%), informal ethics advice (23%), legal

reviews (13%), waiver exemptions (8%), information requests (7%) and formal advisory opinions (3%) – see Figure 2 – Types of Cases Reviewed. The office has designed in-take and execution procedures to process inquiries received through a variety of methods i.e. email, direct phone, fax, web-based, hot-line, in-person and anonymous.

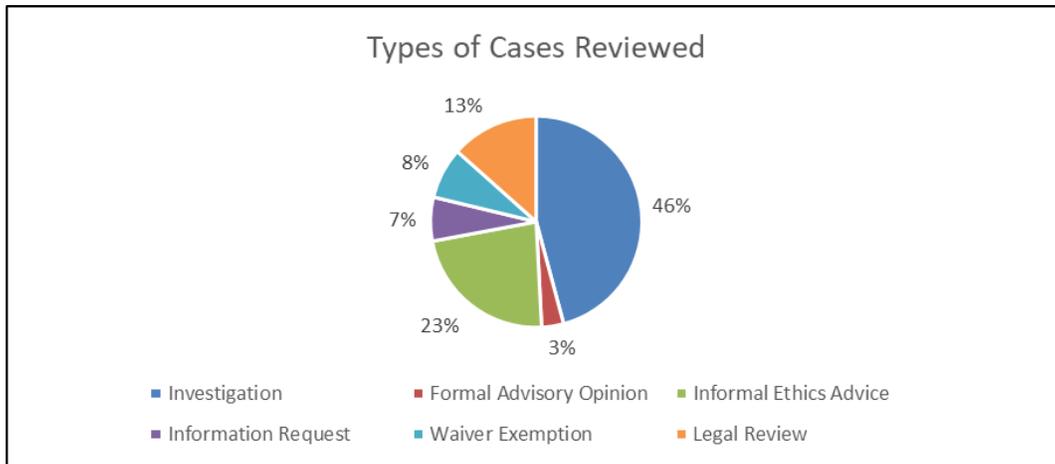


FIGURE 2- TYPES OF CASES

Our review also noted that the office has made significant updates to its manuals and standard operating procedures over the four-year period and implemented new tools and processes to enhance compliance and to accommodate the increased case load. Of the eighty-nine (89) case files examined, only sixteen minor observations were recorded. Those observations were primarily related to document management practices (standardization of forms, optimization of existing tools, and consolidation of data storage systems). As noted in Figure 2- Distribution of Observations, the number of observations decreased as the volume of cases increased for the years reported. This increased level of compliance can be attributed to the changes OEA has made and continues to make to improve the office processes and documentation.

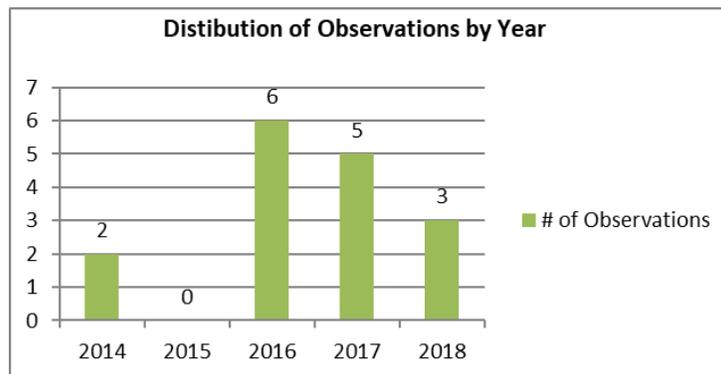


FIGURE 3 - DISTRIBUTION OF OBSERVATIONS BY FISCAL YEAR

QCM made recommendations to further enhance operations of which some were already in-progress. Recommendations included - (1) OEA continue with the practice of ongoing updates to their documents and processes to ensure operations are efficient and meet the changing demands on the office; (2) focus on securing additional enhancements and features for the existing automated operational system (Salesforce) to consolidate data for better management, storage and reporting; and (3) consider electronic storage for the primary data storage.

Based on our review, QCM concludes that the Prince George's County Office of Ethics and Accountability (OEA) has created the necessary procedures and methods to support investigations as required to meet the needs of the Prince George's County Code of Ethics found in the Prince George's County Code, Sections 2-298 through 2-309. There is a robust system for receiving, evaluating, and processing various types of inquiries related to ethics. OEA has also developed the necessary systems and reporting structure to effectively communicate actions to its CEO and relevant agencies to support follow-up and closure of the reported incidents. The efforts of the Prince George's County Office of Ethics and Accountability support the goal to promote the public's trust of County Government and its elected officials.