



Office of the Independent Inspector General

FY2025 Budget Presentation

October 30, 2024

Good afternoon Chairman Daley and Members of the Board of Commissioners:

Pursuant to Cook County Ordinance, the mission of the Office of the Independent Inspector General (OIIG) is to detect, deter and prevent public corruption, fraud, waste, mismanagement, unlawful political discrimination, and other forms of misconduct in the operation of Cook County government. The jurisdiction of the OIIG is broad and has increased in scope over the years. It includes all Offices under the Cook County Board President, the Cook County Board of Commissioners, Cook County Health, the Forest Preserves of Cook County, and the separately elected Cook County officials such as the Assessor, Treasurer, Clerk, Sheriff, and Board of Review. Pursuant to State statute, our office also has jurisdiction over other government officials who are appointed by the Cook County Board or the President such as trustees of local sanitary districts and mosquito abatement districts. In addition, through an intergovernmental agreement, our office provides inspector general services and oversight to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD).

The OIIG is currently staffed with a total of 14 employees including the Inspector General, two Deputy Inspectors General, one General Counsel, one Assistant Inspector General, 8 Investigators and one Office Manager. We have 5 vacancies that will be filled during this fiscal year. Additionally, we have requested an additional FTE for FY2025 for an Administrative Assistant which will then complete our office staffing for the total 20 FTE positions in our FY2025 budget request.

The OIIG continues to receive a high number of annual complaints to review and triage. Six years ago in 2018, the OIIG received a total of 557 complaints for consideration and possible investigative action. That number is now 615 with approximately one month left in the fiscal year. We attribute this high volume in complaints to several factors, including greater awareness of our office by the community through word of mouth and positive media reports as well as our increased jurisdictional scope.

As mentioned in July during Mid-year Budget Hearings, we reclassified two positions in the OIIG to demonstrate our need to retain and attract highly qualified staff to process certain complaints and potentially conduct investigations related to such. We elevated an investigator position to Supervising Investigator in connection with sexual harassment and discrimination. We also reclassified a Supervising Investigator position to Assistant Inspector General to manage the continued high volume of work related to Shakman Compliance.

As for other matters, the OIIG's operational strategy has been to hire highly qualified staff members who are very diverse in their personal and professional backgrounds. Our staff includes former prosecutors, former federal law enforcement agents, a former internal affairs of police investigator, and former members of other state and local governmental agencies. We also have personnel with audit, accounting and banking backgrounds, including a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), and Certified Fraud Examiners on our staff. In addition to our professional expertise, the OIIG collaborates with other governmental agencies and utilizes technology to maximize our efficiency.

While handling the high volume of complaints, the OIIG also continually strives to maintain a high level of quality and professionalism in its work product. In that regard, we note that between 91 and 95 percent of the recommendations for remedial action made by our office over the last two years have been adopted by the agencies to which they were made. In addition to our investigations, the OIIG also provides training to County employees and professional organizations, testifies at disciplinary and other proceedings, and continues its role in employment oversight through its responsibilities related to the various government entities' Employment Plans.

The OIIG budget for FY2024 was \$2,456,335. The proposed FY2025 OIIG budget seeks funding in the amount of \$2,789,173, an increase of \$332,838 or 13.6%, most of which is devoted to salaries and benefits for our staff which remains relatively lean given the broad mandate of our office.

Looking forward, we will seek the Board's support when we request a budgetary floor for the OIIG starting in fiscal year 2026. We examined the budget of seven Inspector General's Offices in the Chicago area. For this sample, evidence revealed that our Office ranked as the second lowest funded IG Office in comparison to the overall appropriations for the entire government entity the IG is charged to oversee.¹ An Amendment that ties our budget as a percentage of the overall Cook County government budget would strengthen our independence in fact and appearance. It will also ensure that the OIIG will have access to the funding it needs as costs rise and the OIIG has additional responsibilities.

Further, the Better Government Association stated in a report that the City of Chicago Inspector General's Office is one of a small number of departments with a guaranteed budget floor and must receive funding equal to or greater than 0.14% of the total annual appropriations.² We think it would be beneficial for Cook County government to do the same for the OIIG.

Lastly, we evaluated our Intergovernmental Agreement with the MWRD (IGA). We are currently negotiating a modification in the IGA or, alternatively, considering not to renew the IGA in May 2025. As a commissioner stated last year during the budget hearings, it is a sweetheart deal for the MWRD but what does the County get from it. The commissioner's question prompted us to reevaluate the IGA. Our primary responsibility is to the County, but we also believe in assisting other governmental agencies especially those with an overlapping constituency. Nonetheless, we have an obligation to fulfill our mission to the County pursuant to the OIIG Ordinance.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Office of the Independent Inspector General proposed budget for fiscal year 2025. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Tirrell J. Paxton
Independent Inspector General

¹ See Attachment A

² Excluding payments to sister agencies and pension payments above the 2014 level.

ATTACHMENT A

	Inspector General Office	Total Agency Budget FY 2024	Total OIG Budget FY 2024	% OIG Budget of Total Agency	FY2024 Budgeted Positions
1	Cook County Office of the Independent Inspector General **(See Notes 3 and 4)	\$ 8,765,983,283	\$ 2,456,335	0.03%	19
2	City of Chicago Office of Inspector General	\$ 18,341,105,000	\$ 14,216,049	0.08%	124
3	Office of Executive Inspector General, Illinois Governor	\$ 176,987,655,145	\$ 10,393,500	0.01%	88
4	Chicago Public Schools OIG	\$ 8,489,500,000	\$ 7,487,378	0.09%	58
5	IL Department of Children and Family Services OIG	\$ 2,008,197,200	\$ 2,507,400	0.12%	19
6	Chicago Housing Authority OIG	\$ 1,279,491,250	\$ 2,232,503	0.17%	15
7	Chicago Park District OIG	\$ 569,590,037	\$ 1,008,565	0.18%	9