



## MARYLAND OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR EDUCATION

### INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY | 22-0077-C

#### **Findings Regarding an Allegation that the Maryland State Department of Education and the State Superintendent of Schools Engaged in a No-Bid Contract Involving a Former Education Colleague.**

The Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education (OIGE) initiated an investigation after receiving a complaint alleging that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the State Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Mohammed Choudhury, awarded a no-bid contract with a former colleague outside of the State's procurement process.

The OIGE reviewed established MSDE policy and the Code of Maryland Regulation (COMAR), Title 21.0505 – Sole Source Procurement governing the justification of a sole source rather than awarding a contract through the competitive sealed bidding process.

In addition to the OIGE's review of this allegation, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) conducted an internal review through the Assistant Attorney General representing MSDE. Based on the reviews, the OIGE determined that MSDE did follow all procurement procedures. In addition, the OIGE determined that the MSDE sole source procurement request was reviewed by the Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs and the Procurement Review Group of the Office of the State of Procurement. Lastly, the Board of Public Works approved the sole source contract on August 10, 2022.

The OIGE investigation did not substantiate the allegation.

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Unless otherwise noted, the OIGE applies the preponderance of the evidence standard in determining whether local school system personnel have committed misconduct.

**BRIAN FROSH**  
*Attorney General*



**ELLIOTT L. SCHOEN**  
*Principal Counsel*

**ELIZABETH HARRIS**  
*Chief Deputy Attorney General*

**CAROLYN QUATTROCKI**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**STATE OF MARYLAND**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
**MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

August 22, 2022

██████████  
Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032

Sent by EMAIL ██████████

**Reference Case No: 22-0077 Civic Solutions Group**

Dear ██████████:

In your August 15, 2022, letter you asked the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for the following information: 1. Number of contracts awarded to Civic Solutions Group (CSG) by MSDE since July 2021; 2. The amount of each contract; and 3. The procurement method used. Below is a response to your questions. Specific detailed information supporting each sole source is included in three attached folders: Procurement A, October 2021; Procurement B, April 2022; and Procurement C, August 2022.

Since July of 2021, three contracts have been awarded to CSG. An MSDE procurement officer and MSDE leadership reviewed and approved each sole source contract. The intent of the three contracts is to meet specific and urgent needs of the agency that required the delivery of services by a vendor with unique experience, knowledge, and background in statewide transformational and educational change. The MSDE determined that the CSG team is

composed of individuals who have the unique background and skills MSDE required for these projects based on their prior proficiency and competency gained through holding positions at the highest levels of leadership at State and local school systems. Moreover, the CSG team has successfully engaged in transformational educational work nationwide.

Two of the contracts were small procurements, \$50,000 or under, and within MSDE's authority to issue. The October 2021 sole source contract was for \$47,000. The term of the contract is from October 18, 2021 until October 17, 2022. The scope of the work is related to the MSDE's Maryland Leads grants initiative funded by the federal COVID relief funds designed to accelerate student learning after the two year pandemic school closures. The contracted work includes developing a Common Grant Application, scoring rubrics, technical assistance sessions, educational materials, and training webinars. The contract documents and rationale for the sole source is attached in the folder labeled "Procurement A Oct 2021".

The April 2022, sole source contract was a \$50,000 small procurement within the MSDE's procurement authority. The term of the contract is April until July 31, 2022. The contract was amended without additional cost through August 31, 2022. The purpose of the contract was to provide support for the agency's reorganization that is consistent with the programmatic goals under the Blueprint for Maryland's future and the Maryland Leads grant program. The contract documents and sole source rationale are attached in the folder labeled "Procurement B April 2022".

The third sole source contract is for \$392,000, and the contract term is September 2022 – June 2024. The purpose of this contract is to deliver additional necessary services related to the Maryland Leads grant program and the agency's realignment of statewide services consistent with legislative mandates requiring that the agency's structure and work be aligned with the

Blueprint for Maryland's future. This sole source contract went through the vetting process of the Governor's Office of Small, Minority and Women Business Affairs and the Procurement Review Group of the Office of State of Procurement and received approval from both entities. An attorney in the MSDE unit of the Office of the Attorney General reviewed and approved the contract for form and legal sufficiency. In addition, the sole source contract was approved by the Board of Public Works on August 10, 2022. The specific scope of work and sole source rationale are attached in the folder labeled "Procurement C August 2022".

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elliott L. Schoen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'E'.

Elliott. L. Schoen