



Office of Inspector General

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20580

April 21, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: Commission Staff and Contractor Personnel

FROM: Roslyn A. Mazer

SUBJECT: What You Need to Know about the FTC Office of Inspector General

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) is an independent organization within the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) that is charged with protecting the integrity of agency programs and operations. We strive to ensure that the FTC is carrying out its mission to protect consumers and maintain competition in the most effective and efficient manner. This memo will inform you about our office and the important role that each of you can play in alerting the OIG to suspected wrongdoing and how you can assist us to make our agency more efficient.

Who Are We and What Do We Do?

The FTC OIG is an independent office established pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. Our function is to prevent and detect fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in the government, and to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in our agency's operations and programs through audits, evaluations, investigations, and other reviews. The OIG accomplishes its work through our professional staff of auditors, program analysts, investigators, attorneys, and other personnel. While we have a unique role, we have a shared responsibility with the rest of the agency to advance the FTC's important mission.

OIG auditors perform objective audits, evaluations, and reviews of FTC programs and activities to determine whether these programs are achieving their intended results, and to identify ways to improve performance and management in the future. Recent OIG audits and evaluations have included a review of FTC financial statements for the prior fiscal year and a review of the FTC's implementation of the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002. In performing audits and evaluations, we analyze and verify agency records, obtain

information through interviews and questionnaires, and conduct physical inspections. My office is committed to giving full consideration to management's views as part of the processes. We keep agency management informed of emerging findings and allow managers to comment on our draft reports and proposed recommendations. Once a report is complete, the OIG issues a final report, which we provide to the FTC Chairperson and Commissioners and other management officials. Our audit and evaluation reports are available to the public and can be accessed through the OIG website at <https://www.ftc.gov/about-ftc/office-inspector-general/oig-reading-room/reports-correspondence>.

The OIG also seeks input from FTC management and staff for new audits, evaluations, and reviews that will advance the economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of the FTC mission. These self-initiated, "capacity-building" activities must be carefully scoped and risk-based due to the OIG's limited resources. Each year, we develop a work plan aligned with the OIG Strategic Plan based on input from FTC management and staff; the findings and recommendations of past OIG reports; Management Challenges identified by the OIG in past years; the body of work generated by the rest of the OIG community; suggestions from members of Congress, congressional staff, and the Government Accountability Office; and other sources.

Our office also investigates allegations of fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, and employee misconduct. Our investigators seek facts relating to allegations of wrongdoing by agency employees, contractors, and other persons or entities involved in activities affecting the agency. At the conclusion of an investigation, our investigators prepare a report of the allegations and findings, some of which require additional action. Investigations that uncover allegations of criminal activity are referred to the Department of Justice for potential criminal prosecution or civil remedies. If allegations of administrative misconduct are found, the OIG forwards the matter to management for potential action. Because our investigations often address sensitive matters, confidentiality is necessary, and investigation reports are not publicly available. When our investigations reveal systemic or policy concerns, we issue Management Advisories with recommendations to address these issues.

The OIG keeps the FTC leadership and Congress fully informed about weaknesses and deficiencies in the agency's operations and makes recommendations to improve the FTC's economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. To keep the public and Congress well informed, we also provide a semiannual report describing our current audits, investigations, evaluations, and other activities, as well as the status of unimplemented recommendations from previous reports.

OIG personnel must adhere to rigorous professional standards, and I ask all OIG staff to have Individual Development Plans that will hone their skills and leverage the experience of the federal OIG community. The OIG actively participates in many of the policy and training activities sponsored by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE). The OIG also participates in CIGIE's peer review program to help ensure that our operations comply with professional standards and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

Your Rights and Duties

You have a duty to report suspected fraud, waste, abuse, and misconduct involving FTC operations, employees, contractors, or programs to the OIG or other appropriate authority. Not only is this duty required by regulation and Executive Order, it is also the right thing to do. We need to hear from you if you have information or concerns about possible wrongdoing at the agency. FTC employees and contractors have a right to direct, unrestricted access to the OIG. You can contact the OIG in person, by fax, email, regular mail, or by calling the OIG Hotline at (202) 326-2800. If you have a question about whether a particular matter should be reported to the OIG, you may contact our office. Managers who have questions about what matters should be reported to the OIG may consult with me or members of my staff, the FTC Office of General Counsel, or the Human Capital Management Office.

The OIG is committed to honoring requests for confidentiality of individuals who contact our office to the extent permitted by the law. We will handle all documents and information in an appropriate and professional manner. Additionally, we are committed to protecting the rights of employees who complain, cooperate, disclose information, or make protected disclosures to the OIG. Federal law affords these employees whistleblower protection, which prohibits government personnel from retaliating against an employee who reports suspected fraud, waste, or abuse to management or the OIG. Prohibited retaliation generally includes adverse employment actions (or threats to take such actions), such as: a non-promotion; a disciplinary action; a detail, transfer, or reassignment; an unfavorable performance evaluation; a decision concerning pay, benefits, or awards; or a significant change in duties, responsibilities, and working conditions. Whistleblower retaliatory actions are strictly forbidden, and the OIG will take appropriate steps to protect the rights of employees who contact us with such allegations.

The Office of Special Counsel (OSC) also has the authority to receive and investigate whistleblower complaints and allegations of whistleblower retaliation. Unlike the OIG, the OSC has authority to prosecute cases and to seek corrective action from the FTC by filing a complaint with the [Merit Systems Protection Board \(“MSPB”\)](#) to enforce corrective action for the whistleblower and initiate disciplinary action against the individual responsible for the retaliation. [Click here](#) for more information on the OSC.

Why It’s Important to Cooperate with the OIG

To accomplish its mission, the OIG must have prompt and complete access to personnel, facilities, and any records relating to matters the OIG is investigating or reviewing. You have a duty to assist and cooperate with OIG personnel in the course of an investigation, audit, evaluation, or other OIG review. This means that all employees, managers, and staff are required to respond to OIG requests for information, including providing statements to OIG representatives (unless they have been advised that they are the subject of a criminal investigation). Employees are also required to provide OIG representatives with access to records (including reports, databases, and documents), other information or material, or facilities,

upon request.

Employees must provide requested information, records, or other materials to the OIG promptly, completely, in the requested manner, and directly without going through an intermediary (such as a manager or supervisor) for review prior to disclosure. Employees must not impose burdensome administrative requirements or screening procedures that could impede the OIG's access to people, documents, or facilities, or otherwise attempt to impede our access to required information. OIG personnel respect the multiple demands made upon FTC employees and, to the extent possible, will accommodate scheduling difficulties or other time constraints employees might face when responding to OIG requests.

FTC staff are not required to obtain permission or inform managers before speaking with OIG representatives during investigations, audits, evaluations or other OIG reviews. However, employees may contact a manager with questions regarding the responsibility to assist and cooperate with the OIG or scheduling meetings with the OIG, unless, in the context of an investigation, they are instructed not to do so by OIG personnel. Under these circumstances, managers should not question staff about their interactions with the OIG.

Failure to cooperate with an OIG request for information or records is serious misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action up to and including removal. Further, furnishing false information or concealing any type of information from the OIG or obstructing OIG investigations, audits, or other inquiries could constitute a violation of law and result in disciplinary action or criminal prosecution.

I invite you to contact us with questions, comments, or concerns about improving the way our agency performs its work or about preventing and detecting fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. The FTC OIG website contains additional useful information about our activities. See <https://www.ftc.gov/about-ftc/office-inspector-general/oig-reading-room>. Agency employees may contact the OIG in confidence as follows:

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