Independent Procurement Review ("IPRO")

By: Skyler M. Akins
Auditor & Independent Procurement Review Officer

AN INTEGRITY SERVICE TO LEVERAGE YOUR AUDIT FUNCTION’S INDEPENDENCE TO PROMOTE TRANSPARENCY AND ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING AND PROCUREMENT
Who am I?

**Skyler Akins**

**Hometown:**
Rockmart, GA

**Major:**
Political Science

"I am West Georgia"

• 32 Years Old (Sagittarius)
• Georgia/Metro Atlanta Native
• Fluent in Spanish
• Certified Economic Development Professional
• Only child (but an extrovert)
• Homeowner at 28 & Neighborhood President
• Professional Piano Instructor-Teach children ages 8-16 and play at the weddings of close friends.
• I have worked in legislative/policy offices at the federal (U.S. House of Representatives), state (GA General Assembly & Regional Commissions), and local level (Atlanta City Council & Cave Spring City Council).
• Passionate about ethical and transparent government.
• Authored the recent and previous term legislation for City Council for the Open Checkbook recently adopted by the City of Atlanta and presented at a Council retreat on peer cities/states with “Open Checkbooks”.
• Assisted with the implementation and training of ELMS (Electronic Legislative Management System).
The Chief Financial Officer and City Attorney have dual reporting authority to the Mayor and Atlanta City Council.
Independent Procurement Review
“The Beginning”
Public trust in the government remains near historic lows. Only 18% of Americans today say they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right “just about always” (3%) or “most of the time” (15%).
Background/Context of Audit

- Amanda Noble, CIA, CISA is the City of Atlanta’s 2nd Independent Auditor.
- A Primary Area of Responsibility: Waste, Fraud, and Abuse.

The City Auditor and designated staff have access to any and all City records, property, staff, and resources, pursuant to code:

Section 2-605. - Access to records and property

- All city officers and employees shall allow the city auditor immediate access to any and all books, records, documents, personnel, processes (including meetings) and other requested information, including automated data, pertaining to the business of the city and within their custody regarding powers, duties, activities, organization, property, financial transactions, contracts, and methods of business required to conduct an audit or other official duties. In addition, such officers and employees shall provide access for the auditor to inspect all property, equipment, and facilities within their custody. Further, all contracts with outside contractors, vendors and agencies shall include an audit clause to provide for the city auditor’s access to all records, and those of their subcontractors, needed to verify compliance with the terms specified in the contract.
• The City Auditor is charged with conducting performance and financial audits of all departments, offices, boards, activities, and agencies of the City of Atlanta.

• The City Auditor reports to an audit committee comprised of three (3) citizen members, as well as representatives of the Mayor and City Council, and ensures that City government is accountable, transparent, and cost-effective by providing audit and integrity services.

• The City’s Department of Procurement is charged with procuring all supplies, services, construction, professional, and consultant services for the City.

• The Atlanta City Council desires to create the function of Independent Procurement Review, within the City Auditor’s Office, to improve the quality, efficiency, and integrity of the procurement process in the City.
What is the “beauty” or “niche” of Independent Procurement Review?

- The term “Independent” in “Independent Procurement Review Officer” (“IPRO”) comes from the powers, roles, and responsibility of the City Auditor to be independent of the City and its officials/employees.

- The independence granted to the City Auditor’s Office through the Atlanta City Charter allows for an unfiltered, unbiased, and qualifications-based review of the City’s Procurement Process.

- The Standard Operating Procedures (“SOP’s”) for Independent Procurement Review mirror the SOP’s for the Department of Procurement. The “IPRO” is responsible for oversight of the City’s procurement process and making sure that the City’s Procurement Code is followed. Independence Statements are signed by each IPRO and approved by the City Auditor & Deputy City Auditor for each solicitation.

- The City of Atlanta’s Procurement Code is modeled after the American Bar Association’s Model Procurement Code.

- IPRO’s monitor for “red flags” of fraud AND conflicts of interests as defined in the Association of Fraud Examiner’s Manual.

- If an Investigation is warranted, IPRO’s follow the Council of the Inspectors General Quality Standards for Investigations.

- **Objective:** The deterrence of contract and procurement fraud in the City of Atlanta.
General Roles and Responsibilities of Independent Procurement Review

Part 1 (Charter and Related Laws), Subpart A (Charter), Article 2 (Legislative), Chapter 6 (City Auditor), Section 2-603 (Powers and Duties)

- General Responsibilities and Authorities of the Independent Procurement Review Office:
  - (i) Independent Procurement Review Officers shall have the authority to perform independent reviews on solicitations of any value including retroactive procurements and emergency procurements.
  - (ii) Independent Procurement Review Officers shall have the authority to observe all stages of the procurement process as provided in this Charter and the code.
  - (iii) Independent Procurement Review Officers shall be provided all documents and resources by the chief procurement officer, or their designee, needed to complete any independent review.
  - (iv) Independent Procurement Review Officers shall provide notice to Council of any extensions or cancellations of solicitations or discretionary reviews that they conduct.

- Review of ALL Contracts with an Aggregate Value of One Million Dollars ($1,000,000.00) or Greater
The Charter: Independent Procurement Review Officers (“IPRO”) Part 1

The (Independent) City Auditor shall:

- Assign Independent Procurement Review Officers to review all procurement records, as provided in section 2-1108, of solicitations with an aggregate value of $1,000,000.00 or greater, seeking council authorization pursuant to sections 2-1188, 2-1189, 2-1191, 2-1191.1, or 2-1193 and conduct a conflict verification of each proponent responding to solicitations. Independent Procurement Review Officers shall not opine regarding the procurement process, but shall provide an Independent Procurement Review Report to the council that the contract file is complete, or note areas of perceived deficiencies.

- Procurement Source Selections subject to Audit (IPRO) Review: *Invitations to Bid (“ITB”), Request for Proposals (“RFP”), Sole Source Procurements, Special Procurements, Request/Statement for Qualifications.*

- A recent Charter Revision (18-O-1769) clarified that the City Auditor and IPRO’s can review all Solicitations/Procurements (including previous ones) upon request, for any dollar amount, and any reason.
The Independent Procurement Review Report shall be included with all proposed legislation for contracts with an aggregate value of $1,000,000.00 or greater seeking council authorization pursuant to sections 2-1188, 2-1189, 2-1191, 2-1191.1, or 2-1193 and shall include conflict verification. The council shall not approve legislation for contracts as described in this subsection without first having received the Independent Procurement Review Report.
The Charter: Independent Procurement Review Officers (“IPRO”)  
Part 3

Independent Procurement Review Officer shall have the authority to observe all stages of the procurement process as provided in this Charter and the code. Independent Procurement Review Officers shall be provided all documents and resources by the chief procurement officer, or their designee, needed to complete any independent review. Independent Procurement Review Officers shall not opine upon or provide any management functions of the procurement process, and shall alert the city auditor to any perceived deficiencies or concerns in the procurement process that may require additional review.
“I don’t think any process will stop corruption, but hopefully identifying red flags and providing them to decision makers in close to real time as possible will help clean things up.” - City Auditor Amanda Noble
Questions?

Presented by:

Skyler M. Akins | Performance Auditor
Independent Procurement Review Officer (Charter Sec. 2-603)

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