



September 4, 2024

Mr. Kevin Donahue
City Administrator
Office of the City Administrator
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 513
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Donahue:

As the administration undertakes its important review of violence interruption (VI) contracts and grants, I write to offer suggestions based on the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA)'s June 2022 [report](#), *Near Act Violence Prevention and Interruption Efforts: Opportunities to Strengthen New Program Models*.

Throughout the scope of our work (which spanned June 30, 2016, through June 30, 2021), the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) contracted for VI services from three community-based organizations: Collaborative Solutions for Communities, Training Grounds, and the Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative. The contracts, which were awarded through a competitive process administered by the Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP), specified in some detail the scope of work, the meaning of key terms such as "high-risk individuals," and requirements for contract staffing, community engagement, organizational capacity, contractor qualifications, professional development, data management, transportation, reporting, deliverables, and contract administration.

Today, ONSE relies on subgrants awarded by the Progressive Life Center for VI services provided by Life Deeds, the Ward 5 Violence Prevention Network, Together We Rise, J&J Monitoring, and Dramatic Solutions. The memoranda of agreement which govern these subgrants are much less detailed than the contracts awarded by OCP, possibly reflecting weaker standards or requirements in areas such as grantee staffing patterns, organizational capacity, grantee qualifications, organizational capacity, professional development, and transportation services. A return to contracts awarded by OCP might strengthen vendor oversight and accountability while ensuring fair competition. Moreover, the previous system in which a senior ONSE manager supervised the VI contractors would provide clearer lines of

authority than the current system involving two layers of grantees. It is also worth noting that none of the original VI contractors continued to provide services under the system of subgrants, although J&J Monitoring served as a subcontractor to one of the contractors (the Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative).

Going forward, stronger performance measures for the VI program and for each VI contractor or grantee should also promote accountability for results. In our June 2022 report, we noted a pattern in which ONSE reported encouraging data for select communities, time periods, or types of violent crime while failing to provide a more comprehensive picture of trends across communities and longer periods of time. Today, the program continues to emphasize output data (such as number of mediations, number of community events sponsored, number of D.C. Jail peacemaking consultations) as well as percentage annual changes in key outcomes (shootings, gun crimes, gun homicides). We highlighted in our report the need for more consistent, outcome-oriented measures and noted that the year-over-year comparisons, positive or negative, do not reflect the VI program's goal of sustained, long-term reductions in gun crimes and homicides. In fact, the original set of VI contracts specified a very clear and meaningful goal: "to achieve a 40% reduction in assaults with a dangerous weapon and homicides in priority communities by the end of fiscal year 2024."

I hope this information is valuable to the administration's review of VI contracts and grants. If you have any questions about the findings and recommendations from our NEAR Act work, please do not hesitate to contact the auditor-in-charge, Jason Juffras, at jason.juffras@dc.gov or 202-489-9909.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathleen Patterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent than the last.

Kathleen Patterson
District of Columbia Auditor

cc: Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice
Jed Ross, Chief Risk Officer, Office of Risk Management
Kwelli Sneed, Interim Director, Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement