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INSPECTOR GENERAL

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the Inspector General

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March 11, 2011

Ms. Pat Durette
Finance Director
Somerville Public Schools
181 Washington Street
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Ms. Durette:

As you know, the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General (OIG) reviewed Somerville Public Schools' June 2009 receipt of a \$51,342 Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Program Equipment Assistance Grant from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The OIG is reviewing ARRA-related grants to identify potential vulnerabilities to fraud, waste, and abuse and other risks that could negatively impact the accountability, transparency, and anti-fraud mandates contained in the statutory language and interpretive guidance of ARRA. This review should not be construed as an investigation of the program or a comprehensive programmatic review. The OIG intends these reviews to assist recipients of ARRA funding to identify and address risks.

According to the grant application, your district planned to purchase two "blast chillers" for a total of \$35,806 for the Winter Hill Community School. In December 2010, the OIG requested you provide information regarding the purchase of the blast chillers to verify that you conducted the purchase pursuant to federal and state requirements. You informed the OIG that you used the state contract GRO24 for Foodservice Equipment, managed by the Commonwealth's Operational Services Division (OSD). The use of the state contract is compliant with the terms of M.G.L. c. 30B, the Uniform Procurement Act.

The OIG review verified that:

- The items purchased (two Traulsen RBC100 Blast Chillers) are from an approved vendor on state contract GRO24;
- The amount paid by the district for the blast chillers matched the amount of the DESE grant award.

The OIG also found that although Somerville used a statewide contract for the purchase, the district did not execute its own contract with the vendor. The OIG has previously opined that, "...[W]hen using a Statewide or Department contract, a municipality must execute its own contract with the vendor." OSD concurs with the OIG on this matter and has made it a requirement for cities and towns that wish to use its statewide contracts. For the full OIG opinion on this subject, please visit our Procurement Bulletin: <http://www.mass.gov/ig/publ/nldec08.pdf>.

Also, helpful and practical free procurement guidance and training can be found on the OIG website, including step-by-step procurement information available in the OIG manual, [Municipal, County, District, and Local Authority Procurement of Supplies, Services, and Real Property](http://www.mass.gov/ig/igpubl.htm) (the Chapter 30B manual), available at <http://www.mass.gov/ig/igpubl.htm>. In addition, an introductory Online Bidding Basics training course is available on the OIG's website at http://www.mass.gov/ig/mcppo/bb_online.htm.

I appreciate your cooperation in this review of ARRA funding. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions or concerns you may have regarding this review.

Sincerely,

Neil Cohen
Deputy Inspector General

cc: Mary Anne Gilbert, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Kathleen C. Millett, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Anthony Pierantozzi, Somerville Public Schools