

# CITIZEN-CENTRIC REPORT

## FISCAL YEAR 2024

INTEGRITY - INDEPENDENT - ACCOUNTABLE - INNOVATIVE - RESPECTFUL

### ABOUT US

The Office of the Public Auditor (OPA) of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is an independent agency of the Commonwealth Government established by Article III, Section 12 of the Commonwealth Constitution. OPA's constitutional and statutory mandates require the prevention and detection of fraud, waste, and abuse in the collection and expenditure of public funds through audits and investigations. Additionally, the CNMI Legislature has expanded OPA's responsibilities to oversight authority and assistance in several areas, including elections, government ethics, and public accountability.

### OUR MISSION

We uphold public trust in government accountability, transparency, and services with effective audits and investigations.

### OUR VISION

Improve citizens' lives through impactful audits and investigations.

### OUR TEAM



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### FY 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Earned a "PASS" rating during our Quality Control Review of our audits covering October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2023.
- Recognized and commended by the 23rd CNMI Legislature for continuously receiving the highest peer review rating from the Association of Pacific Island Public Auditors through Senate Resolution No. 23-18.
- Peer reviewed the Republic of Palau and the State of Yap Offices of the Public Auditor.
- Certified Fraud Examiner designation earned by an investigator.
- Certified Internal Control Auditor designation earned by an auditor.
- Criminal Justice degrees earned by two investigators.
- Two investigators were sworn in as Special Federal Officers.
- Invested in a robust case management system for OPA's Investigation Division.
- Endorsed the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institution's (PASAI) 2024-2034 Strategy Plan at the 25th PASAI Congress in Cook Islands.

# OUR ACTIVITIES *by the numbers...*

**3** REPORTS

- CNMI's Implementation of Audit Recommendations (Report Nos. 24-01 & 24-02)
- Flash Report: Citizen-Centric Report for FY 2023

**4** ADVISORY OPINIONS

OPA provided advisory opinions regarding real or hypothetical scenarios under the Government Ethics Code Act.

**1** 2024-01

Is it permissible for an immediate relative of a public official to receive a permit, license, or grant under a program managed by the public official?

**2** 2024-02

Can public employees of a government office solicit contributions from private businesses to support its mission to provide services to a segment of the local community?

**3** 2024-03

Could a government employee work part-time in the private sector to offset austerity pay cuts imposed on all government workers?

**4** 2024-04

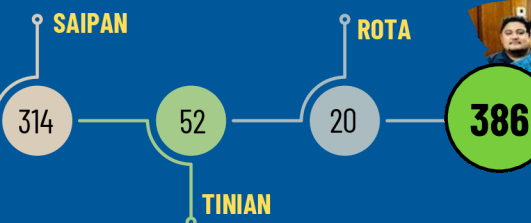
Is it permissible for a board member to submit an employment application for a vacant position within the same organization where they hold a board position?

**38** AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

OPA tracked a total of 46 recommendations, 8 were resolved and 38 remain unresolved as of June 30, 2024.

**12** ETHICS PRESENTATIONS

OPA conducted 12 ethics presentations to 386 public employees to educate and raise awareness of the Government Ethics Code Act, covering topics related to conflicts of interest, gifts and gratuities, political activities, and financial disclosures.



**92** TOTAL COMPLAINTS

**BE THE SOLUTION: COMBAT FRAUD, WASTE & ABUSE**

Office of the Public Auditor

**28** ACTIVE/PENDING CASES

OPA has 28 cases classified as either active or investigation hold.

**41** CLOSED COMPLAINTS

Complaints are closed when they are unfounded, unsubstantiated, or outside of OPA's purview or jurisdiction.

**23** REFERRED TO AGENCY

OPA referred 23 complaints to the appropriate agencies.

**23** CASE REFERRALS

SPOT IT FRAUD STOP IT (670) 235-3937 HOT LINE

| Referred To:  | No. of Cases |
|---|--------------|
| Public Integrity Task Force                             | 9            |
| Office of the Attorney General:                         |              |
| Criminal Division for Potential Prosecution             | 4            |
| Civil Division for Potential Monetary Recovery of \$98K | 1            |
| Federal Partners for Joint Investigation                | 8            |
| Government Agency for Action                            | 1            |
| <b>Total Case Referrals:</b>                            | <b>23</b>    |

Government Ethics Code Act presentation request form available at [www.opacnmi.com](http://www.opacnmi.com).



## BUILDING AN ETHICAL WORK CULTURE

OPA recognizes the following agencies for their commitment to building an ethical work culture and upholding the Government Ethics Code Act:

### SAIPAN

- Commonwealth Ports Authority
- Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
- Council for Developmental Disabilities
- Department of Labor
- Division of Coastal Resource Management
- Division of Customs Biosecurity
- Marianas Public Land Trust
- Northern Marianas Technical Institute
- Public Assistance Office

### TINIAN

- Department of Commerce
- Department of Finance
- Department of Fire & Emergency Medical Services
- Department of Labor
- Department of Public Safety
- Department of Public Works
- Division of Customs Biosecurity
- Department of Land & Natural Resources
- Northern Marianas College
- Tinian Casino Gaming Control Commission
- Tinian Health Center
- Tinian Mayor's Office
- Tinian Municipal Treasury

### ROTA

- Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Fire & Emergency Medical Services
- Department of Labor
- Department of Public Safety
- Rota Mayor's Office

## FINANCIAL AND SINGLE AUDIT

During the fiscal year, OPA published nine financial and single audit reports on its website, all of which were conducted by independent auditors. Reports are published when received by OPA.

| ENTITY                                       | FISCAL YEAR | REPORT DATE | OPA PUBLISH DATE |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| Commonwealth Utilities Corporation           | 2021        | 09/21/2023  | 12/07/2023       |
| Public School System                         | 2022        | 02/23/2024  | 02/28/2024       |
| Department of Public Lands                   | 2021        | 04/16/2024  | 04/24/2024       |
| Northern Marianas Technical Institute        | 2021        | 04/29/2024  | 09/11/2024       |
| Marianas Visitors Authority                  | 2022        | 04/30/2024  | 07/16/2024       |
| Commonwealth Economic Development Authority  | 2021        | 06/21/2024  | 07/24/2024       |
| Commonwealth Utilities Corporation           | 2022        | 06/26/2024  | 09/20/2024       |
| Northern Marianas College                    | 2023        | 06/28/2024  | 07/02/2024       |
| Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands | 2021        | 08/15/2024  | 08/16/2024       |





# OUR FINANCES *making every cent count...*

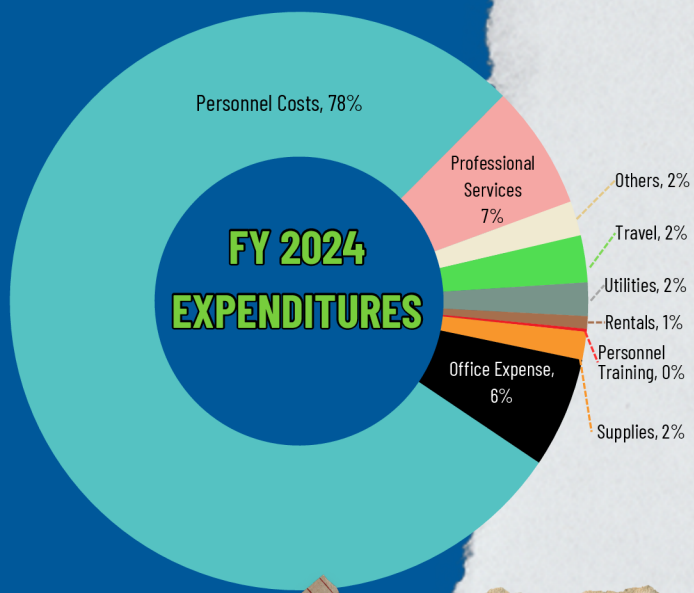
## BUDGET VS. ACTUAL

| DESCRIPTION           | BUDGET              | ACTUAL            | UNDER BUDGET      |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Personnel Costs       | 1,408,950           | 743,731           | 665,219           |
| Professional Services | 127,500             | 66,247            | 61,253            |
| Office Expenses       | 86,175              | 58,699            | 27,476            |
| Rentals               | 12,200              | 6,700             | 5,500             |
| Travel                | 43,191              | 25,004            | 18,187            |
| Personnel Training    | 87,957              | 1,582             | 86,375            |
| Utilities             | 51,700              | 17,783            | 33,917            |
| Supplies              | 41,500              | 14,937            | 26,563            |
| Others                | 38,700              | 18,462            | 20,238            |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>         | <b>\$ 1,897,873</b> | <b>\$ 953,145</b> | <b>\$ 944,728</b> |

“ Good governance is about making the most of limited resources. ”



| STAFF LEVELS | 2024 | 2023 | 2022 |
|--------------|------|------|------|
| BUDGET FTE   | 19   | 19   | 25   |
| ACTUAL FTE   | 12   | 12   | 17   |



## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT

OPA was awarded a Technical Assistance Grant (TAP) of \$196,717 in June 2023 From the US Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs to support Personnel Training and Leadership Development, Information Technology Enhancement, and Investigation Equipment and Supplies projects. During Fiscal Year 2024, TAP grant funds were utilized to support personnel training costs, investment in a case management system, and repairs/upgrades to OPA’s evidence room. Below is an overview of OPA’s expenditure for the last two fiscal years.

## TAP GRANT EXPENDITURES

| ACCOUNT                  | BUDGET            | 2024             | 2023             | CUMMULATIVE      |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Professional Services    | 12,500            | --               | --               | --               |
| Repair and Maintenance   | 3,050             | 2,948            | --               | 2,948            |
| Supplies                 | 10,000            | --               | --               | --               |
| Dues and Subscriptions   | 42,900            | 32,150           | --               | 32,150           |
| Personnel Training Costs | 124,317           | 27,150           | 33,734           | 60,884           |
| Technology Equipment     | 3,950             | 3,950            | --               | 3,950            |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>            | <b>\$ 196,717</b> | <b>\$ 66,198</b> | <b>\$ 33,734</b> | <b>\$ 99,932</b> |

**PUBLIC AUDITOR**  
**free**

**1 CMC § 7831**

**a** 1% of all amounts appropriated by Commonwealth law for all government agencies’ operations and activities are to be withheld for OPA.

**b** Executive directors of all public corporations shall pay to the Public Auditor 1% of its total operations budget from sources other than legislative appropriations.

## OPA REVENUE

During the fiscal year, OPA’s revenue amounted to \$1,553,002, consisting of \$920,283 and \$632,719 from the General Fund and autonomous agencies, respectively.



# OUR FUTURE OUTLOOK



SCAN CODE

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- 1220 Route 312  
Capitol Hill, Saipan

## INITIATIVES & CHALLENGES

- Appointment of a Public Auditor.
- Initiate planning and preparation for APIPA 2025 as the host country.
- Assist government and autonomous agencies in meeting financial and single audit reporting deadlines and addressing audit findings.
- Work with the CNMI Legislature to strengthen and maintain OPA’s funding source and independence.
- Conduct outreach opportunities across all CNMI government agencies, departments, and programs.
- Develop, implement, and monitor strategic plan deliverables.
- Develop a human resources management strategy plan.
- Recruit and retain competent staff.
- Collaborate with other OPA Investigation Offices in the Pacific Region to develop an Investigation Peer Review System.
- Establish a presence on Rota and Tinian.
- Continue collaborating with federal and relevant US Office of Inspector General counterparts to combat fraud, waste, and abuse of federal funds.

## BUILDING CAPABILITIES



### BRIDGING THE GAP OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY



CNMI Delegation  
APIPA 2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



ASSOCIATION OF PACIFIC ISLANDS PUBLIC AUDITORS (APIPA)

