



April 20, 2011

TO: Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director
National Institutes of Health

FROM: /Daniel R. Levinson/
Inspector General

SUBJECT: Appropriations Funding for National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Contract HHSN268-2006-4276G With WorldTravelService (A-03-10-03113)

The attached final report provides the results of our review of appropriations funding for National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute contract HHSN268-2006-4276G with WorldTravelService.

Section 8L of the Inspector General Act, 5 U.S.C. App., requires that the Office of Inspector General (OIG) post its publicly available reports on the OIG Web site. Accordingly, this report will be posted at <http://oig.hhs.gov>.

If you have any questions or comments about this report, please do not hesitate to call me, or your staff may contact Lori S. Pilcher, Assistant Inspector General for Grants, Internal Activities, and Information Technology Audits, at (202) 619-1175 or through email at Lori.Pilcher@oig.hhs.gov. We look forward to receiving your final management decision within 6 months. Please refer to report number A-03-10-03113 in all correspondence.

Attachment

Department of Health & Human Services

**OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**APPROPRIATIONS FUNDING
FOR NATIONAL HEART, LUNG, AND
BLOOD INSTITUTE CONTRACT
HHSN268-2006-4276G
WITH WORLDTRAVELSERVICE**



Daniel R. Levinson
Inspector General

April 2011
A-03-10-03113

Office of Inspector General

<http://oig.hhs.gov>

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Section 8L of the Inspector General Act, 5 U.S.C. App., requires that OIG post its publicly available reports on the OIG Web site.

OFFICE OF AUDIT SERVICES FINDINGS AND OPINIONS

The designation of financial or management practices as questionable, a recommendation for the disallowance of costs incurred or claimed, and any other conclusions and recommendations in this report represent the findings and opinions of OAS. Authorized officials of the HHS operating divisions will make final determination on these matters.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) is 1 of 27 institutes and centers of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). The NIH Office of the Director sets policy and plans, manages, and coordinates NIH-wide programs and activities. Like all Federal agencies, NHLBI is required to comply with appropriations statutes when acquiring supplies and services with appropriated funds.

Federal Appropriations Statutes

An agency may obligate appropriations for goods and services when (1) the purpose of the obligation or expenditure is authorized, (2) the obligation occurs within the time limits for which the appropriation is available, and (3) the obligation and expenditure are within the amounts provided by Congress.

Federal statutes limit the purpose for which an agency may use appropriations to “the objects for which the appropriations were made except as otherwise provided by law” (31 U.S.C. § 1301(a)). A fiscal year appropriation may be obligated only to meet a legitimate, or bona fide, need arising in, or in some cases arising prior to but continuing to exist in, the appropriation’s period of availability (31 U.S.C. § 1502(a)). Unless otherwise specified in the appropriation, the period of availability for most funds is the fiscal year for which the appropriation was made.

Bona fide needs may involve transactions that cover more than 1 fiscal year, depending on the nature of the services involved: “The general rule is that the fiscal year appropriation current at the time the contract is made is chargeable with payments under the contract, although performance thereunder may extend into the ensuing fiscal year” (23 Comp. Gen. 370, 371 (1943)).¹ Multiyear contracting authority provided by statute is an exception to the bona fide needs rule.

The Comptroller General has held that “the question of whether to charge the appropriation current on the date the contract is made, or to charge funds current at the time the services are rendered, depends on whether the services are ‘severable’ or ‘entire’ [nonseverable].”² When services are continuing and recurring, they are severable, and the agency may fund the contract with fiscal year appropriations from the year in which services are provided, unless otherwise authorized by statute. When services are for a single outcome or effort, they are nonseverable and therefore chargeable to the fiscal year in which the contract was awarded, even though performance may extend into subsequent fiscal years.

Congress determines the amount of funding available to an agency by enacting appropriations to cover programs, projects, purchases, and services needed by the agency during the period for which the funds are made available. The Antideficiency Act prohibits an agency from obligating or expending funds in advance of or in excess of an appropriation unless specifically authorized

¹ As cited in GAO-04-261SP, *Appropriations Law*, Vol. I, p. 5-24.

² As cited in GAO-04-261SP, *Appropriations Law*, Vol. I, p. 5-23.

by law (31 U.S.C. § 1341(a)(1)). The Antideficiency Act requires agencies to report violations to the President and to Congress, with a copy to the Comptroller General (31 U.S.C. § 1351). Office of Management and Budget Circular A-11, *Preparation, Submission and Execution of the Budget*, part 4, § 145, prescribes the methodology for this reporting.

WorldTravelService Indefinite-Delivery, Indefinite-Quantity Contract

On December 3, 2004, the General Services Administration awarded Federal Supply Schedule GS-33F-0012R, an indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity contract to WorldTravelService in Rockville, Maryland. The contract required WorldTravelService to provide professional travel agent and related services to Government agencies.

An indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity contract provides for the issuance of orders for the delivery of supplies or services during the fixed period of the Contract. Within set minimum or maximum limits, agencies place orders for individual needs as they are required. Limits may be stated as number of units or as dollar values.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Contract Award

On March 15, 2006, NHLBI awarded delivery order HHSN268-2006-4276G (the Contract), totaling \$131.8 million,³ against the Federal Supply Schedule contract for a 1-year base period totaling \$20.4 million with four 1-year options. The Contract required WorldTravelService to provide standardized travel-related services, including airline and ground transportation services, for reviewers in the NIH Scientific Review and Evaluation Activities program. We determined that the Contract was for severable services because the services were continuing and recurring and NHLBI and its reviewers received value when WorldTravelService provided each travel-related service.

Departmental Review of National Institutes of Health Contracts

In 2008, HHS management formed an internal review group of program, contract, and financial personnel called the “Tiger Team.” From November 2008 through February 2009, the Tiger Team assessed 176 HHS contracts, including 21 NIH contracts. The Contract was 1 of the 21 NIH contracts assessed. For 17 of the 21 contracts, the Tiger Team identified instances in which contract funding was not consistent with the current HHS Acquisition Regulation or appropriations law.⁴ The Tiger Team report did not identify its concerns or quantify funding errors by contract.

³ NHLBI initially awarded the Contract to WorldTravelService for \$102.8 million. On October 18, 2006, NHLBI modified the Contract to include booking services for meetings and conference events and direct payments of travel expenses for foreign reviewers and increased funding accordingly.

⁴ *Funding Multiple Year Contracts; Tiger Team Summary Report*, July 29, 2009.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Objective

Our objective was to determine whether NHLBI funded the Contract in compliance with the purpose, time, and amount requirements specified in appropriations statutes.

Scope

We reviewed all obligations and selected payments made under the Contract during fiscal years 2006 through 2009. We did not review NHLBI's internal controls because our objective did not require such a review.

We performed our fieldwork at NHLBI in Bethesda, Maryland.

Methodology

To accomplish our objective, we:

- reviewed appropriations and acquisition laws and regulations and Contract requirements;
- reviewed the Tiger Team report;
- reviewed contract file documentation, including the statement of work, to determine the nature of the products or services to be provided; and
- analyzed all funding documents and selected payment vouchers to determine what appropriations were obligated, recorded, and expended.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

RESULTS OF AUDIT

NHLBI funded the Contract in compliance with the purpose, time, and amount requirements specified in appropriations statutes. NHLBI had a bona fide need for the items and appropriately funded the Contract with appropriations from fiscal years 2006 through 2009.