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CITY OF YONKERS
DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

**PERIODIC REPORT OF GRANT FUNDING FOR
COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

To: Mayor Mike Spano
Hon. Liam McLaughlin, City Council President
Honorable Members of the Yonkers City Council
Vincent Spano, Yonkers City Clerk

From: Brendan J. McGrath, Inspector General

Re: Grant Inspection and Review Report for
Aisling Irish Community Center

Date: November 25, 2014

This report is issued in response to City Council Resolution No. 52-2008 which directs the Inspector General to “develop an ongoing oversight program to monitor Community Based Organizations and other entities that receive grant funding from the City of Yonkers” and Resolution No. 94-2008 which directs the Inspector General to “move forward” with the plan that was submitted.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The Aisling Irish Community Center, Inc. (“Aisling”) is a community organization that provides a variety of programs and services for members of the Yonkers community. A review of the organization reveals that adequate financial controls and oversight are in place to ensure that the Yr 39 Community Development Block Grant is being used appropriately and in accordance with the agreement between Aisling and the City of Yonkers.

Organizational Overview

Aisling is a not for profit corporation existing in accordance with §501c3 of the IRS Tax Code and registered with the State of New York. It is located at 990 McLean

Ave, Yonkers, New York 10704. Aisling is a community outreach center providing a wide range of social, legal, psychological, educational and cultural programs.

Originally established to meet the needs of an increasing Irish immigrant and Irish-American Community, Aisling has developed into a social services organization delivering social, educational, cultural, and recreational programs to a diverse Yonkers community. Aisling employs 4 full time staff members and approximately 40 volunteers. Independent contractors rent space in the center and teach a variety of classes, charging members a minimal fee to attend. Some of the activities offered by Aisling include counseling, assistance with Medicaid and Medicare, arts and crafts classes, creative writing, and yoga. However, it is Aisling's "Young at Heart" seniors program that is the focus of our review. At present, there are approximately 250 registered members of the seniors program, where members participate in a variety of planned activities, such as lectures, yoga and computer classes and take occasional trips to places and events of particular interest to its elderly members.

Grant Summary

According to figures provided by Orla Kelleher, Aisling's Executive Director, the most recent annual budget for revenue was about \$400,000, of which, aside from the \$20,000 Community Development Block Grant from the City of Yonkers, came from private donations, fund raising events, and the Irish government.

In Yr 39 of the Community Development Block Grant ("CDBG") program, (February 1, 2013 to January 31, 2014), the City of Yonkers, through the Department of Planning and Development, approved Aisling for a grant in the amount of \$20,000 to reimburse eligible program expenditures for Aisling's "Young at Heart" seniors program. These expenditures included rent, utilities and salaries for its four full time employees consisting of an executive director, a social worker, a receptionist/employment coordinator, and a program/events coordinator.

A review of the documentation submitted by Aisling indicates that Aisling received the full amount of the grant or \$20,000, in two payments. The \$20,000 reimbursement was sought by Aisling and approved by the Department of Planning and Development after the conclusion of Year 39. By letter dated April 8, 2014, Aisling requested an initial drawdown of \$14,000 of the CDBG funding totaling \$20,000. Documentation produced by Aisling shows that this portion of the grant was applied to the following expenditures:

\$5,700	Salary for Executive Director
\$1,000	Salary for Social Worker
\$2,800	Salary for Receptionist/Employment Coordinator
\$1,200	Salary for Program/Event Coordinator
<u>\$3,300</u>	Rent for Leasehold Property
Total \$14,000	

By letter dated June 13, 2014, Aisling requested a second drawdown consisting of the remaining \$6,000 of the CDBG. Documentation produced by Aisling shows that this portion of the grant was applied to the following expenditures:

\$1,000	Rent of Leasehold Property
\$3,000	Salary for Senior Program Coordinator
<u>\$2,000</u>	Utilities (Con Edison)
Total \$6000	

Site Visit

On October 17, 2014, this office met with Ms. Kelleher, who explained that Aisling was in the midst of making improvements to its leased premises, which will double its space. Ms. Kelleher explained further that with more than 250 seniors as registered members, Aisling serves from 65 to 70 members on a weekly basis. Aisling's staff includes four full time employees, a number which, as Ms. Kelleher described, was likely to increase as the number of programs offered by Aisling expands. Ms Kelleher continued that Aisling offers a number of age related programs to include chair yoga, guest speakers on various age related topics, and arts and crafts. Aisling also provides other programs including karate for kids and classes on Irish culture, music and dance.

Moreover, the premises used by Aisling do appear to be in a neat and organized condition, and able to accommodate the variety of programs/classes offered to by Aisling to its members.

Program Participants

Under the contract with the City of Yonkers, Aisling, as a grant recipient, is required to submit regular quarterly progress reports to the City of Yonkers. However, due to the timing of the grant, Aisling submitted only one progress report which addresses the final quarter of Year 39. Under applicable HUD regulations, programs that receive funding must document at least 51% of the program participants are from families with low to moderate incomes. According to "Basically CDBG", dated November 2007, a publication from HUD's office of Office of Block Grant Assistance, an elderly person is assumed to be of low to moderate income. As described by the Ms. Kelleher and supported in the documentation provided, the Young at Heart program was comprised of seniors, and therefore fits within the HUD requirements for low to moderate income families.

Internal Controls

This office found that the CDBG funding was supported by appropriate documentation supplied by Aisling and the Yonkers Department of Planning and Development. Moreover, our review revealed that there is a system of internal controls in place to ensure that the funds are spent for its intended use and in accordance with its

contract with the city of Yonkers. Aisling also has in place written accounting policies and procedures that are kept current.

Ms Kelleher stated that she and the treasurer for the organization are responsible for signing all checks for expenditures. Aisling makes use of Quickbooks, accounting software for small businesses. Moreover, Aisling has retained the services of McEnerney, Brady & Company, LLC, a professional accounting firm, to conduct annual independent audits. An independent auditor's report as of December 31, 2011 and 2010, submitted by Aisling reveals that Aisling was operating in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Conclusion

By all accounts, Aisling appears to be an important and active part of the Yonkers community, providing a number of programs and services. Our review of the Young at Heart program, whose members are seniors, finds that the \$20,000 grant was used appropriately and in accordance with Aisling's agreement with the City of Yonkers.