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OIG RECOMMENDS CHANGES TO MUNICIPAL COURT FUNDING STRUCTURE

The New Orleans Office of Inspector General (OIG) today released a [report](#) titled “Municipal Court Funding” and a one-page [In Brief](#) of the report’s findings and recommendations. The OIG reviewed Municipal Court funding from 2008 through 2015 and found that Municipal Court cost \$4.7 million to operate in 2015, approximately 20 percent more than it cost to operate in 2008.

Three entities were responsible for funding the Court (City, State, and Court), but the ambiguity of the legal framework failed to delineate clearly each entity’s responsibilities. The resulting financial practices raised numerous concerns regarding the transparency, accuracy, and legality of the Court’s funding structure.

In order to meet its operational needs, the Court relied on self-generated revenues from fines and fees assessed on convictions to fund its operational expenses. The extent to which the Court relied on self-generated revenues created the potential for impediments to due process. In addition, evaluators found that the Court lacked the necessary performance measures to assess its effectiveness and funding needs accurately.

The City agreed with the OIG’s recommendation to fund Municipal Court fully through a General Fund appropriation. The OIG also recommended that the City seek the repeal of state laws that establish fees to fund Municipal Court and that the Court should develop performance measures that accurately reflect its operational and financial needs.

“The OIG found serious problems with Municipal Court’s funding structure,” stated Inspector General Ed Quatrevaux. “The consolidation of Municipal Court and Traffic Court in 2017 provides the courts an opportunity to implement a more efficient and transparent funding structure for the combined entity.”

The evaluation of Municipal Court Funding is the fifth in a continuing series of OIG reports examining New Orleans justice system funding.

All OIG reports are available at nola.oig.gov.

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