

**CSMFO Awards Program (2017)**

Innovation Award

# San Francisco Fraud Hotline Outreach and Education



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## Entrant details

Name of Organization

| City and County of San Francisco

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## Entry details

Jurisdiction

| City and County of San Francisco

Population (or Customer Count)

| 864,816

Name

| Steve Flaherty

Title

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**AFFIDAVIT and RELEASE**

Indicate the type of program nominated.

Other

Describe the type of program for your submission.

The City and County of San Francisco's Whistleblower Program undertakes outreach and education initiatives that publicize and promote the fraud hotline to more than 35,000 employees, plus contractors, vendors, and members of the public.

Describe the innovation being nominated and all materials submitted with this application.

The following materials are used to support the Whistleblower Program's outreach and education initiatives:

- Whistleblower Program Fraud Bulletins – One-page guides to raise awareness of red flags associated with common and costly occupational fraud schemes like bid rigging, grant misuse, inventory theft, and mischaracterized expenses. We have produced 8 bulletins since 2016 and plan to continue them indefinitely.
- Whistleblower Program On-Demand Outreach Video – Awareness of the fraud hotline by employees, customers, contractors, service providers, suppliers and other third parties is important in ensuring fraud hotline effectiveness. This 2:36 minute video, which we produced in 2016, provides potential reporters with a brief introduction of the Whistleblower Program, the matters appropriate for the filing, and how to contact the Whistleblower Program.
- Investigation Liaison Training Video – The Whistleblower Program uses a co-sourced investigation model to resolve reports. Whistleblower Program staff leads certain investigations, whereas others may be referred to another city department involved in the allegation or with jurisdictional oversight for investigation and response. Coordinating with other departments uses the expertise of all involved and leverages resources to ensure that allegations are resolved in a timely manner. The Whistleblower Program provided this 3:52 minute training video, which we produced in 2017, to department contacts to help them learn and spread the word on how to appropriately handle and resolve matters referred to their department for response.
- Fraud Hotline Webinar Series – The webinars build investigative excellence through collaboration with other jurisdictions. These webinars promote leading fraud hotline operation practices and effective investigation techniques to local, state, and federal jurisdictions throughout the United States and Canada. We have organized, sponsored and, live-streamed 21 webinars to date.

What is the purpose and/or goal of the innovation?

A high substantiation rate is achieved when well-informed reporters make high-quality reports that are effectively investigated. The Whistleblower Program's goal is to educate employees on matters appropriate for investigation, and to ensure that investigations into these matters are effective and efficient.

The materials listed above (examples of which we submit with this application) help minimize reports to the hotline

that do not involve wrongdoing and guide potential reporters about what types of improprieties are reportable events. The outreach and education materials help promote a culture that supports employees who report their suspicions to the Whistleblower Program.

Describe what the innovation has done to improve operations and efficiencies in your organization.

Our outreach and education efforts contributed to corrective or preventive actions in 41 percent of complaints investigated and closed in fiscal year 2016-17 (up from 31 percent in 2013-14), the highest rate in the history of the program, which began in 2005. Further, the fraud bulletins have been used by departments to proactively address fraud risks through the implementation of internal controls recommended in each bulletin.


In 2016 the outreach videos were incorporated to new employee orientation programs at all city departments, allowing the Whistleblower Program to use scarce staff resources to focus on investigations that ensure the integrity of public institutions.


What was the commitment of money and staffing required to implement the innovation? How difficult would it be for other agencies to replicate this innovation?


We did this work without a budget increase but did get some help with the videos from staff outside the Whistleblower Program. We achieved the goal we set before creating the bulletins and videos: to maximize their benefit while minimizing their production costs. The bulletins—and even the videos—should be replicable by many other jurisdictions. Also, the technology for webcasts, including WebEx productivity tools, is now readily available and affordable. Overall, it would not be difficult for other agencies to replicate our innovations. In fact, other jurisdictions have already contacted the Whistleblower Program for guidance on creating their own fraud bulletins, which is a good place to start.


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Attachment name  
Whistleblower Program O.

<https://www.youtube.com>



Attachment name  
Fraud Hotline Webinar Se..

<https://www.youtube.com>



Attachment name  
Department Liaison Train..

<https://www.youtube.com>