SANDAG

OIPA | Office of the Independent Performance Auditor

ANNUAL INVESTIGATIONS REPORT
Fiscal Year 2026

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Annual Investigations Report Overview

The Office of the Independent Performance Auditor (OIPA) is the official body of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) to investigate potential fraud, waste, abuse, and gross mismanagement. Most investigations are initiated through the Whistleblower Hotline. Information submitted through the Hotline is classified as a Whistleblower Report (Report). Investigations can also be initiated directly by the Independent Performance Auditor (IPA), or upon request by the SANDAG Board of Directors (Board) and Audit Committee.

This report provides an overview of the Whistleblower Hotline investigation process, the number and types of Reports submitted in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026, as well as a summary of outcomes and actions taken for Reports closed during the fiscal year.

The Whistleblower Hotline

Purpose

The Whistleblower Hotline is a secure, confidential, and reliable way for employees, contracted parties, members of the public, or other stakeholders, to report allegations of fraud, waste, abuse, and gross mismanagement at SANDAG. Reports can be submitted by mail, email, or through a secure, third-party compliance hotline administrator by phone or a link available on OIPA's website. Individuals may choose to remain anonymous.

The Investigation Process

OIPA conducts a preliminary analysis of each Report to determine if the matter warrants an investigation and enough information is available to initiate an investigation. We evaluate the following:

1. Does the Report involve SANDAG property, infrastructure, employees, officials, contractors, or does it otherwise fall within OIPA's jurisdiction?
2. Does it meet the criteria of fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement?
3. Did it occur within the last year? If not, does it impact current operations?
4. Was sufficient information provided to initiate an investigation?
5. Is the matter currently being litigated?

The investigation process is confidential; therefore, investigation details are not shared with anyone, including whistleblowers. The confidential process protects all parties involved and the integrity of the investigative process. Upon conclusion of an investigation, results are either published in a standalone investigation report or summarized in the *Annual Investigations Report*.

FY 2026 Whistleblower Reports by Allegation Type

Reports include a range of allegation types. The table below shows the number of Reports by allegation type received in FY 2026.

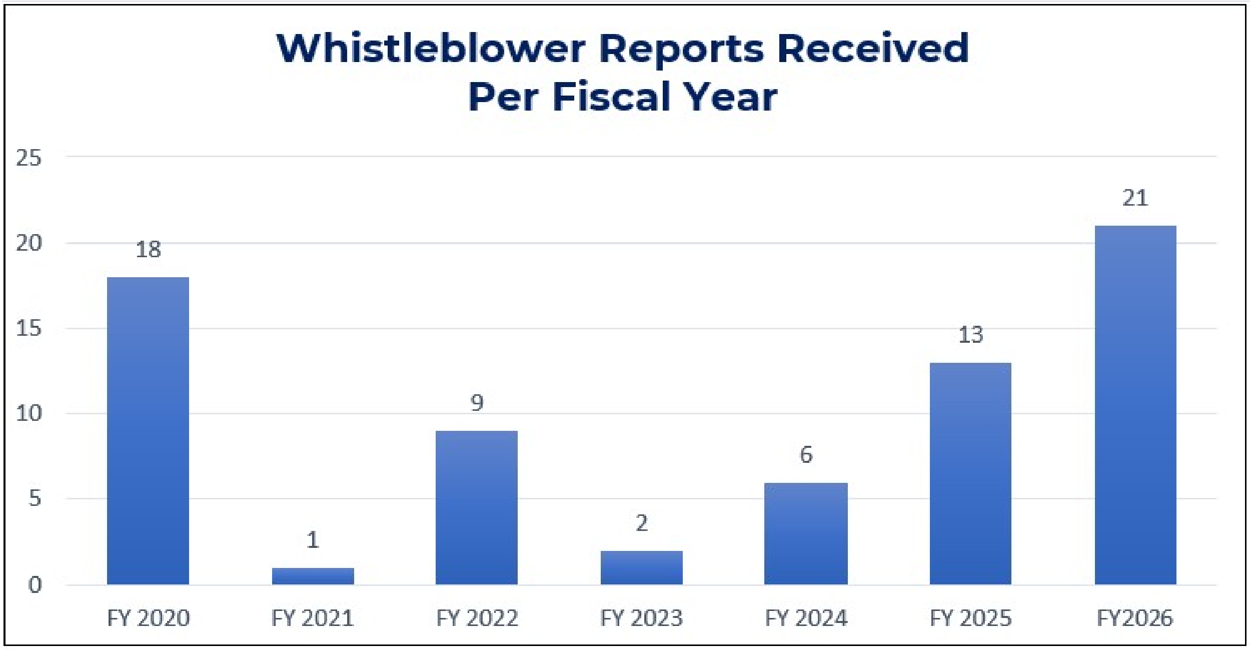
Allegation Type	Total
Other[1]	15
Waste	2
Conflict of Interest	2
Customer Service	1
Fraud	1
Grand Total	**21**

Source: Compiled from OIPA Whistleblower Hotline Tracking Database

[1] Allegations categorized as "Other" include a diverse range of allegations including improper grant awards, project management issues, security protocol vulnerability, and operational inefficiencies.

Whistleblower Reports Received Between FY 2020 and 2026

In FY 2026, OIPA received and reviewed 21 Reports. The exhibit below provides an annual comparison of Reports received since FY 2020.



Summary of Whistleblower Reports Received

OIPA started FY 2026 with two (2) open Reports. During FY 2026, 21 Reports were filed. At the end of the fiscal year, eight (8) Reports remain open.

Summary of Closed Whistleblower Reports

As the chart above indicates, 15 Reports were closed in FY 2026.

- Two (2) were closed after an investigation.
- Thirteen (13) were closed because they were not fraud, waste, abuse or gross mismanagement.

A detailed list of these closed Reports is included at the end of this report.

Results of Closed Whistleblower Reports

The Reports were closed for the following reasons:

- One (1) had allegations that were refuted. After an investigation, the allegations were determined to be false.
- One (1) had an allegation that was not substantiated. After an investigation, there was not enough evidence to prove or disprove the allegation.
- Two (2) were forwarded to the relevant departments within SANDAG for review after a preliminary review determined the cases did not qualify as fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement. Both issues were successfully resolved.
- Two (2) were closed after a preliminary review determined the allegations did not qualify as fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement or there was insufficient information to investigate.
- Nine (9) were referred to Audit because the Report involved systemic issues, not allegations of fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement.
    - Seven (7) of these Reports were referred directly to OIPA's current audit of Human Resources Hiring and Promotion Practices. OIPA specifically requested employees submit concerns regarding improper hiring and promotion practices directly to the Hotline for evaluation during the audit.

Whistleblower Reports Summary

#	Date Opened	Allegation Type	Report Details	Outcome	Action
1	2/25/2025	Conflict of Interest	Allegation of subcontractor favoritism	Refuted	No further action
2	6/24/2025	Other	Allegation of micro purchase approvals occurring after purchases	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	Referred to Audit
3	9/12/2025	Other	Allegation of internal mismanagement due to insufficient time for staff-self assessment during performance evaluation process	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	No further action
4	9/30/2025	Waste	Allegation of a contractor not performing	Not substantiated	No further action
5	10/20/2025	Other	Allegation of toll customer double billing	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	Forwarded to appropriate department
6	11/7/2025	Other	Allegation of unsafe driving by Vanpool driver	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	Forwarded to appropriate department
7	12/12/2025	Waste	Allegation of the lack of personnel resources	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	Referred to Audit
8	2/20/2026	Other	Allegation of county grants being used incorrectly	Insufficient information	No further action

Note: See Outcome and Action definitions on page 8.

#	Date Opened	Allegation Type	Report Details	Outcome	Action
9	3/12/2026	Other	Allegation of position not being competitively filled	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	Referred to Audit
10	4/23/2026	Other	Allegation of position reassignment without merit	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	Referred to Audit
11	4/27/2026	Other	Allegation of appointees not having the requisite expertise	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	Referred to Audit
12	4/28/2026	Other	Allegation of promotion lacking transparency	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	Referred to Audit
13	4/30/2026	Other	Allegation of inappropriate promotion due to candidate lacking requisite qualifications	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	Referred to Audit
14	4/30/2026	Other	Allegation of position reclassification without merit	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	Referred to Audit
15	5/7/2026	Other	Allegation of appointees not having the requisite expertise	Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement	Referred to Audit

Note: See Outcome and Action definitions on page 8.

Outcome Definitions

Not fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement
During a preliminary review, the allegations were determined to not meet the criteria for fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement.

Not substantiated
After an investigation, there was not enough evidence to prove or disprove the allegations.

Refuted
After an investigation, allegations were determined to be false.

Insufficient information
Not enough information was provided to evaluate whether an investigation was warranted.

Action Definitions

Referred to Audit
The Report involved systemic issues, not allegations of fraud, waste, abuse, and gross mismanagement, and was referred to Audit for further evaluation during the annual risk assessment process.

Forwarded to appropriate department
The appropriate department was advised of the issue.

No further action
The Report was closed with no further action required.

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Whistleblower Hotline

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