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June 28, 2021

Congressional Committees

Congressional Award Foundation: Review of the FY 2020 Financial Statement Audit

This report presents the results of our review of the Congressional Award Foundation's fiscal year 2020 financial statement audit. The Congressional Award Act established the Congressional Award Board to carry out a program to promote excellence among the nation's youth in the areas of public service, personal development, physical fitness, and expedition or exploration.¹ The Board created the Foundation as a nonprofit corporation to assist in carrying out this program.² The Congressional Award Act, as amended by the Government Reports Elimination Act of 2014, requires the Foundation to obtain an annual financial statement audit from an independent public accountant (IPA).³ The act also requires GAO to review the audit of the Foundation's financial statements and report the results to the Congress annually.⁴

The Foundation received an unmodified opinion on its fiscal year 2020 financial statements.⁵ The IPA found that the Foundation's financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Foundation and the results of its activities and its cash flows in accordance with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles. The IPA also reported that for fiscal year 2020, it did not identify any (1) deficiencies that it considered to be material weaknesses⁶ in the Foundation's internal control over financial reporting or (2) instances of reportable noncompliance or other matters as a result of its tests of the Foundation's

¹The Congressional Award Act, which was first enacted in 1979 (Pub. L. No. 96-114), is classified, as amended, in 2 U.S.C. ch. 19 (§§ 801-808). The act established the Congressional Award Board, whose responsibilities include establishing and administering the Congressional Award Program.

²Congressional Award Act, classified, as amended, in part at 2 U.S.C. § 806(i).

³Government Reports Elimination Act of 2014, Pub. L. No. 113-188, § 902(c)(1), 128 Stat. 2016, 2021 (Nov. 26, 2014), classified, as amended, at 2 U.S.C. § 807.

⁴We reported on the results of our review of the Foundation's fiscal year 2019 financial statement audit in GAO, *Congressional Award Foundation: Review of the Audit of the Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2019*, [GAO-20-539R](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 21, 2020). The Foundation received an unmodified opinion on its fiscal year 2019 financial statements.

⁵The Foundation's financial statements consist of the statements of financial position, the related statements of activities and cash flows, and the accompanying notes to the financial statements.

⁶A material weakness is a deficiency, or combination of deficiencies, in internal control such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity's financial statements will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. A deficiency in internal control exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis.

compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements.⁷ In addition, the IPA reported that it conducted its audit and prepared its report in accordance with U.S. generally accepted government auditing standards. The Foundation concurred with the IPA's conclusions.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to review the audit of the Foundation's fiscal year 2020 financial statements. To satisfy this objective, we performed the following procedures:

- We read and considered the following with respect to the IPA's independence, objectivity, and qualifications:
 - the results of the IPA's most recent peer review,⁸ dated July 22, 2020, which indicated a "pass" rating;⁹
 - the request for proposal that the Foundation posted when it was seeking an audit organization to conduct the audit of its financial statements;
 - the proposal that the IPA submitted;
 - the IPA's certification of independence;
 - the engagement letter between the IPA and the Foundation, which described the respective responsibilities of both parties, set forth the scope and objectives of the audit service, and referenced the professional standards governing the conduct of the engagement;
 - résumés of key audit team members; and
 - documentation related to the continuing professional education of the IPA staff members assigned to the audit.
- We analyzed key audit documentation focusing on (1) the summary planning documents, including the IPA's assessment of the risk of material misstatement in the Foundation's financial statements; (2) the audit procedures developed in response to this assessment; and (3) the audit completion documents summarizing the results and conclusions that the IPA reached.

⁷U.S. generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS), issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, incorporate U.S. generally accepted auditing standards and constitute the professional standards under which the IPA was to perform the Foundation's financial statement audit. For financial statement audits performed in accordance with GAGAS, the auditor is required to report on internal control over financial reporting and on compliance with provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, or grant agreements that have a material effect on the financial statements, regardless of whether the auditor identifies internal control deficiencies or instances of noncompliance. GAGAS does not require the auditor to express opinions on the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting or compliance.

⁸GAGAS requires each audit organization to have a periodic external peer review conducted by reviewers independent of the organization being reviewed. The external peer review should determine whether, during the period under review, the reviewed audit organization's internal quality control system was suitably designed and whether quality control policies and procedures were being complied with to provide the audit organization with reasonable assurance that it conforms to applicable professional standards.

⁹There are two types of peer reviews: system reviews and engagement reviews. System reviews focus on an audit organization's system of quality control, while engagement reviews focus on work performed on selected engagements. Audit organizations can receive a rating of "pass," "pass with deficiency(ies)," or "fail." The IPA received a rating of "pass" on a system review.

- We read the Foundation’s fiscal year 2020 financial statements, the IPA’s audit report on the Foundation’s financial statements, and the IPA’s report on internal control over financial reporting and on compliance and other matters based on its audit.
- We also discussed matters pertinent to our objective with IPA representatives and Foundation management officials.

Our review of the Foundation’s fiscal year 2020 financial statement audit, as differentiated from an audit of the financial statements, was not intended to enable us to express, and we do not express, an opinion on the Foundation’s financial statements or conclude on the effectiveness of its internal control over financial reporting. Furthermore, we do not express an opinion on the Foundation’s compliance with provisions of applicable laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements. The IPA is responsible for its reports on the Foundation dated April 6, 2021, and the conclusions expressed therein.

We conducted this performance audit from February 2021 to June 2021 in accordance with U.S. 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 objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

No Significant Issues Identified Related to the Audit of the Foundation’s Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2020

Based on the limited procedures we performed in reviewing the IPA’s audit of the Foundation’s fiscal year 2020 financial statements, we did not identify any significant issues that we believe require attention. Had we performed additional procedures, other matters might have come to our attention that we would have reported.

Agency Comments and Third-Party Views

We provided a draft of this report to the Foundation and the IPA for review and comment. The Foundation’s National Director and the IPA’s Audit Principal each replied in emails that they had no comments on the draft report.

We are sending copies of this report to the National Director of the Congressional Award Foundation, the Chair of the Congressional Award Board’s Audit Committee, and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available on the GAO website at <https://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-2623 or davisbh@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff members who made key contributions to this report include Charles Fox (Assistant Director), Stephanie Choi (Auditor-in-Charge), and Rachael Skinner.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beryl H. Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beryl H. Davis
Director
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