



NSF OIG CORNER

Efforts to Advance Diversity and Inclusion

By Elizabeth Argeris Lewis, Louise Nelson, and Ken Lish

Increasing diversity in science and engineering education and employment continues to be a high-priority goal of the National Science Foundation, the National Science Board, and the federal government. Like NSF, we are committed to advancing diversity and inclusion in our workforce, our practices, and our products.

What is NSF doing to advance diversity in STEM education and employment?

In our annual management challenges report, we described some steps NSF has taken to advance diversity and inclusion. For example, NSF:

- Expanded its Broadening Participation in STEM portfolio, including the NSF Eddie Bernice Johnson INCLUDES program;
- Offered training on unconscious bias to merit review panelists;
- Piloted the inclusion of Broader Impacts experts in its Committee of Visitors reviews, which provide assessments of the quality and integrity of program operations and advice about proposal decisions;
- Requested 23.5 percent more funding in FY 2023 for its Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) program, which seeks to enhance research competitiveness in U.S. states and territories that have historically received a small share of NSF grant dollars;
- Convened a Racial Equity Task Force to examine the potential for racial barriers and recommend how NSF can address such barriers both internally, for the NSF workforce, and externally, for program delivery; and
- Developed a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) strategic plan to improve DEIA internally.

How is NSF OIG helping to advance diversity and inclusion at NSF and in the research community?

We are also taking several steps to help advance diversity and inclusion. For example, we are:

- Monitoring NSF's progress in measuring and evaluating the outcomes of its policies and programs to increase diversity in the NSF workforce, as well as for program delivery, in areas such as merit review.
- Working with NSF to resolve our audit recommendations. For example, as a result of our review regarding whether merit review panels held remotely are less expensive and provide more diversity and inclusion opportunities than those held in person, NSF is considering ways to improve merit review demographic data to inform future decisions.
- Helping educate and build the capacity of diverse grantees through outreach presentations to the research community.
- Sharing promising practices from our audits of NSF award recipients and NSF operations. For example, our promising practices report describes the most common findings from 18 audits of NSF award recipients and suggests ways to improve compliance in those areas. We also issued a capstone report to summarize key issues identified at multiple recipients of NSF's EPSCoR awards and included suggestions to help the recipient community address them. Both reports aim to help established as well as emerging research institutions and other institutions that are new to managing federal awards.

How are we advancing diversity and inclusion within our own office?

We are developing a DEIA strategic plan for our office to further our DEIA goals and solidify our commitment to DEIA values and principles. We are also active members of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's DEIA Committee, which strives to advance DEIA in continuing education; staffing, recruitment, and hiring; promotions and professional development; business suppliers' diversity; and more through employee work groups and other initiatives.

Want to hear more from us?

Would your institution benefit from learning more about our common audit findings and promising practices we've identified to prevent those findings from occurring? Reach out to Ken Lish at klish@nsf.gov to coordinate an institution-level outreach presentation.

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Elizabeth Argeris Lewis, MPA, is the Executive Officer for the Office of Audits at the National Science Foundation Office of Inspector General, where she advises on internal and external communications. She joined NSF OIG in 2016. She can be reached at alewis@nsf.gov.



Louise Nelson is the Director of Audit Support in the Office of Audits at the National Science Foundation. She is responsible for overseeing quality control of NSF OIG audits of NSF award recipients, and is also the NSF OIG DEIA Council Coordinator. Louise joined NSF OIG in 2011. She can be reached at lnelson@nsf.gov.



Ken Lish, CPA, CFE, MBA, is the Director for the Contract Grant Audits team in the Office of Audits at the National Science Foundation. He is responsible for overseeing NSF OIG audits of NSF award recipients. Ken joined the NSF OIG in 2009. He can be reached at klish@nsf.gov.



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