



NSF OIG CORNER

NSF's Management Challenges for FY 2022

By Elizabeth Argeris Lewis

Each fall, we publish a “Management Challenges” report about the most important management and performance challenges facing the National Science Foundation. Several of these challenges overlap with challenges the recipient community faces.

NSF's FY 2022 management challenges include:

- Increasing Diversity in Science & Engineering Education and Employment;
- Overseeing the United States Antarctic Program;
- Overseeing Grants in a Changing Environment;
- Managing the Intergovernmental Personnel Act Program;
- Overseeing Major Multi-User Research Facilities;
- Mitigating Threats Posed by Foreign Government Talent Recruitment Programs;
- Mitigating Threats Posed by the Risk of Cyberattacks; and
- Managing Transformational Change.

How do you decide what challenges to include in the report?

The *Reports Consolidation Act of 2000* (Pub. L. No. 106-531) requires each agency's inspector general to summarize what the inspector general considers to be the most serious management and performance challenges facing the agency and briefly assess the agency's progress in addressing those challenges. We identify the challenges based on our audit and investigative work, as well as the work of the U.S. Government Accountability Office, the National Science Board, and NSF's various advisory committees. When we determine an area is no longer a top management challenge, we remove it from the report.

Does NSF get a say in what the challenges are?

NSF provides comments on the challenges we identify, but it may not change them. Including a challenge means we believe the area warrants NSF's highest level of attention—it does not mean we think NSF is doing a poor job addressing it. Our assessment of the most serious management challenges helps NSF clarify its goals. NSF's responses to these challenges promote the integrity of NSF-funded projects, help ensure research funds are spent effectively and efficiently, and help maintain the highest level of accountability over taxpayer dollars.

How does NSF demonstrate, and OIG monitor, its progress?

In the report, we describe each challenge, NSF's completed actions, and its ongoing actions to address the challenge. In its annual Agency Financial Report, NSF provides an update of its progress on addressing management challenges identified in the previous year. NSF may also meet with us periodically to talk about progress in addressing challenges or discuss specific criteria for removing a prior year challenge. We also ensure our annual audit work plan includes work to monitor NSF's progress on current management challenges.

How does our Management Challenges report impact the recipient community?

Many institutions in the recipient community are continuing to address fiscal and operational challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which we cover within each applicable challenge area in the report. Our report also addresses the need to continue to increase diversity in science and engineering education and employment. According to NSF's April 2021 report on *Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities*, “Women, persons with disabilities, and some minority groups—Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, and American Indians or Alaska Natives—are underrepresented in science and engineering (S&E). That is, their representation in S&E education and S&E employment is smaller than their representation in the U.S. population.” In addition, the recipient community must continue to address risks posed by foreign government talent recruitment programs.

How can I report research misconduct or other forms of fraud, waste, abuse, or whistleblower reprisal?

- **Web:** <https://oig.nsf.gov/contact/hotline>
- **Anonymous Hotline:** 1-800-428-2189
- **Email:** oig@nsf.gov
- **Mail:** 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22314
ATTN: OIG HOTLINE



Have a question or an idea for NSF OIG's Corner?
Please contact us at OIGPublicAffairs@nsf.gov



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 ealewis@nsf.gov.