



NSF OIG CORNER

NSF Award Terms and Conditions to Prevent Harassment

By Sarah Adams, Billy McCain, and Ken Lish

Harassment in the research enterprise is a pervasive issue. According to a [2018 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report](#), more than 50 percent of female faculty and staff and 20–50 percent of female students encounter or experience sexual harassment in academia. Sexual harassment is a broad form of discrimination that includes gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. In this article, we'll discuss steps NSF has taken to help prevent harassment and our ongoing review of institutions' compliance with NSF's terms and conditions related to harassment.

CHIPS and Science Act Requirements Related to Harassment

The *CHIPS and Science Act of 2022* includes findings, observations, recommendations, and other suggested actions from the 2018 National Academies report. The Act specifically requires NSF to fund research examining the “factors contributing to, and consequences of, sex-based and sexual harassment affecting individuals in the STEM workforce” and “approaches to reduce the incidence and negative consequences of such harassment.” Additionally, NSF must coordinate a follow-up study with the National Academies regarding the examination of harassment's impact on individuals in the STEM workforce.

NSF's Efforts to Help Prevent Harassment

In October 2018, NSF established [an award term and condition](#) requiring recipient organizations to notify NSF of any findings/determinations of sexual harassment, other forms of harassment, or sexual assault regarding an NSF-funded Principal Investigator (PI) or co-PI. It also requires recipients to notify NSF of the placement of a PI or co-PI on administrative leave or the imposition of any administrative action relating to a harassment or sexual assault finding or investigation. The NSF Proposal & Awards Policies & Procedures Guide further specifies that NSF expects all funded research organizations to establish and maintain clear and unambiguous standards of behavior to ensure harassment-free workplaces wherever NSF-funded science is conducted. Additionally, effective in January 2023, for each proposal that includes off-campus or off-site research, the award recipient must certify that the organization has a plan in place that describes how harassment and other abusive or unwelcome behavior will be addressed.

NSF OIG Review of Recipients' Policies and Procedures Related to Harassment

NSF-funded institutions' and NSF's actions are key to helping prevent harassment and protect individuals within the research community. To that end, our office recently initiated a review to evaluate the effectiveness of NSF's harassment-related terms and conditions among the recipient community. As part of the review, we will assess whether the policies and procedures at a sample of 100 NSF-funded institutions comply with relevant NSF harassment terms and conditions and policies. The review will include each institution's policies and procedures related to sexual harassment, other forms of harassment, and sexual assault, as well as any policies or procedures that identify subsequent requirements for complying with

NSF's terms and conditions. We expect to issue a report on our general findings, observations, trends, and/or promising practices by August 2024.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding harassment, please contact NSF's Office of Equity and Civil Rights at programcomplaints@nsf.gov or (703) 292-8020.

To report research misconduct or other forms of fraud, waste, abuse, or whistleblower reprisal, please contact us by:

- **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.



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