

Interim Guidance for Handling Allegations of Failure to Adhere to NSF's Scientific Integrity Policy

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The "National Science Foundation Act of 1950" (Public Law 81-507) set forth the mission and purpose of the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF): "To promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense." Consistent with this mission, the highest standard of Scientific Integrity, as defined by the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) (see: <https://www.nsf.gov/scientific-integrity>), has been the hallmark of the Foundation's culture and key to successful leadership and support for the advancement of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and STEM education in the U.S. In keeping with the mission and duty of the agency, NSF has released an updated NSF Scientific Integrity Policy, which is publicly available through the agency's revised Scientific Integrity Webpage. The NSF Scientific Integrity Working Group (SIWG) was responsible for updating the Policy and overseeing its implementation. The purpose of this Policy is to reaffirm NSF's commitment to a positive culture of Scientific Integrity.

This memorandum is a high-level general interim guidance for handling allegations of failure to adhere to NSF's Scientific Integrity (SI) Policy. Allegations will be submitted by mail or email at SIComplaint@nsf.gov.

A review committee, in which one member will consist of an executive member of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), Local 3403, will be tasked to perform an initial intake of the allegation and will refer the allegation to the Office of Inspector General (OIG). The allegations that will not be followed-up by the OIG will be referred to the Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) and/or the Workforce Relations Branch (WRB) in the Division of Human Resource Management (HRM) as appropriate. Once the referral is made, the allegation will be handled according to the receiving office's policies and procedures. Cases with multiple types of allegations may be handled by more than one office.

The review committee will not conduct any investigations but will assist the receiving office(s) as needed, particularly on scientific integrity issues outside research misconduct (RM) or discrimination and/or harassment. The receiving office will provide periodic updates as appropriate and, once the investigation is concluded, the office will communicate the outcome to the Scientific Integrity Official (SIO).

The SIWG, chaired by the SIO, is tasked with developing the Scientific Integrity Procedures Manual, according to the NSF SI Policy, by the end of February 2025, in collaboration with the Division of Human Resource Management's Workforce Relations Branch (HRM/WRB), the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), the Division of Institution and Award Support (DIAS) Policy Office, and AFGE Local 3403, with input from impacted stakeholders.

This interim guidance will remain in effect until the Scientific Integrity Procedures Manual is publicly released. This guidance does not affect the policies or processes already in place at NSF for allegations such as research misconduct, fraud, harassment, discrimination, or those potentially requiring personnel action.

The main point of contact for matters related to Scientific Integrity is Eduardo Misawa, NSF Scientific Integrity Official (sio@nsf.gov). Comments on the Scientific Integrity Policy and this interim guidance can be provided directly to the SIO or through scientificintegrity@nsf.gov.

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