

NSF Scientific Integrity Policy

It is the policy of NSF to maintain a culture of scientific integrity in accordance with the President's March 9, 2009 Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies on Scientific Integrity and the implementation guidance in the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) December 17, 2010 Memorandum.¹ NSF's policy applies to civil service employees; visiting scientists, engineers, and educators; Fellows, students, and intermittent experts; those working at NSF under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act; and political appointees.

I. Foundations of Scientific Integrity at NSF

Production of data collections and research results should be objective and not influenced by financial interests or affiliations. Nor should scientific or technological findings be suppressed or altered by political officials. Award decisions are made following a rigorous merit review process. NSF expects the scientists and engineers who conduct our merit review process and make funding decisions to adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct. Candidates for scientific and technical positions are selected on the basis of their knowledge, credentials, experience, and integrity.

NSF's internal procedures summarize the various government conflicts rules and provide clear standards governing conflicts of interest.² NSF staff who report information on potential violations of rules and regulations are protected from retaliation; NSF participates in the Office of Special Counsel's (OSC) 2302(c) Certification Program which allows federal agencies to meet the statutory obligation to inform their workforces about the rights and remedies available to them under the Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA) and related civil service laws.³

NSF awardees, whether current or prospective, also are expected to adhere to high standards of ethical conduct. All allegations of research misconduct should be reported promptly to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) as required by NSF policy.⁴

NSF awardees are also subject to the responsible conduct of research requirement of the America COMPETES Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-69). In accordance with Section 7009, NSF requires awardees to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers who will be supported by NSF to conduct research.⁵

Facilitating the free flow of scientific and technological information and maintaining open communication are critical to NSF. The Foundation participates in the Administration's Open Government Initiative.⁶ Through this initiative, NSF publishes high-value datasets such as information on Freedom of Information Act requests, Graduate Research Fellowship Award recipients, abstracts of all funded NSF awards, and NSF funding rates.

Another way that NSF facilitates the free flow of information is through Research.gov,⁷ a portal that provides information on research spending and results. Research.gov publishes summaries of results of research supported by NSF. For awards made effective January 2010, the Foundation requires investigators to submit a brief summary, prepared specifically for the public, on the nature and outcomes of their NSF-funded award.⁸

¹ <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/administration/eop/ostp/library/scientificintegrity>

² <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/manuals/manual15.pdf>

³ See https://www.nsf.gov/od/odi/nofearact_notice.jsp and <https://osc.gov/Services/Pages/Outreach-2302Cert.aspx>

⁴ See <https://www.nsf.gov/oig/report-fraud> and 45 CFR Part 689
http://law.justia.com/us/cfr/title45/45cfr689_main_02.html

⁵ <https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rcr.jsp>

⁶ <http://www.nsf.gov/open>

⁷ <http://www.research.gov>

⁸ *Award & Administration Guide*, Chapter II: (http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/aag_2.jsp)

II. Use of Federal Advisory Committees

NSF's scientific advisory committees operate pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (FACA), Public Law 92-463, and provide advice and recommendations to NSF concerning support for science research and education. This may include advice on program management, overall program balance, and other aspects of program performance; on the impact of NSF research support and NSF-wide policies on the scientific community; and on potential science and research thrusts, long-range plans and partnership opportunities.

NSF invites suggestions for advisory committee membership on the NSF web page.⁹ In addition, NSF issues a Federal Register notice at least once a year to alert a wider audience to the NSF advisory committees. Since vacancies come up on an ad hoc basis when existing FACA charters are renewed and review panels are formed, the Federal Register notice covers NSF's scientific advisory committees and refers persons interested in serving as members or recommending members to the point of contact for the specific committee.

NSF provides biographical information for committee members on the FACA web pages.⁹ Selection of advisory committee members is based on expertise, knowledge, and contribution to the relevant subject areas. NSF follows the U.S. General Services Administration guidance on membership balance.¹⁰

To the extent permitted by law, the NSF Designated Agency Ethics Official provides copies of all Conflict of Interest waivers granted to advisory committee members to the respective Designated Federal Official to be posted on the appropriate advisory committee web site.

NSF applies the following disclaimer on all advisory committee reports, recommendations, and products, unless there is prior agreement to do otherwise:

“The function of Federal advisory committees is advisory only. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the Advisory Committee, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.”

III. Professional Development of Government Scientists and Engineers

NSF has a strong commitment to ensuring that its staff remains at the cutting edge of the nation's workforce by fostering a culture of continuous learning. To that end, NSF permits staff (including scientists and engineers) to pursue research and developmental activities related to NSF's mission and goals such as attending or giving presentations at conferences or involvement in committees on Government time.

NSF also allows its staff to participate in any research or educational institution, scientific society, professional association or editorial board, provided written permission is obtained from the scientist's or engineer's supervisor and ethics counselor.

IV. Implementation

To ensure continued implementation of the policy, NSF has established an email alias for scientific integrity comments or questions: scientificintegrity@nsf.gov.

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⁹ http://www.nsf.gov/about/performance/dir_advisory.jsp

¹⁰ <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21242>