

**THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION PLAN FOR
OPERATIONS DURING A LAPSE IN APPROPRIATIONS**
September 22, 2025

Lapse Plan Summary Overview			
	NSF*	OIG*	NSBO*
Estimated time (to nearest half day) required to complete shutdown activities:	0.5 days	0.5 days	0.5 days
Total number of agency employees expected to be on board before implementation of the plan**:	1,402	62	33
Total number of agency employees expected to be furloughed under the plan (unduplicated count):	1,054	24	9
Total number of employees to be retained under the plan for each of the following categories***:			
Compensation is financed by a resource other than annual appropriations:	251	0	0
Necessary to perform activities expressly authorized by law****:	2	0	22
Necessary to perform activities necessarily implied by law:	62	16	2
Necessary to the discharge of the President's constitutional duties and powers:	0	0	0
Necessary to protect life and property:	33	22	0

*Columns denote staffing for the National Science Foundation (NSF), NSF Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the National Science Board Office (NSBO).

** This line includes Federal employees, as well as rotators on appointments under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act, American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellows, Einstein Fellows, the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) Fellows, and the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship.

*** The number of employees represented here is an estimate for staff needed to perform specific functions and may fluctuate over the duration of a lapse.

**** National Science Board members are appointed by the President for limited terms on a part-time basis, and they should not normally be called upon to engage in the business of the Foundation during a lapse in appropriations.

Brief Summary of significant agency activities that will continue during a lapse:

National Science Foundation (NSF) will use available carryover balances to continue daily operations. Once those balances are exhausted, electronic systems for proposal preparation and submission will remain available for use during a lapse in appropriations, (i.e., Research.gov, and Grants.gov). The Awards Cash Management Service (ACM\$) and the Invoice Processing Platform (IPP) will remain available for the submission and processing of valid payments for recipients and contractors. Recipients may continue performance under their NSF awards during a lapse in appropriations, to the extent funds are available, and the period of performance of the grant or cooperative agreement has not expired. In the event of a lapse, more detailed information on NSF operations for recipients, panelists, and employees will be posted at www.NSF.gov, and will be updated as necessary during a lapse.

Brief Summary of significant agency activities that will cease during a lapse:

In general, no new grants, continuing grant increments, cooperative agreements, or contracts will be awarded. No new funding opportunities (program descriptions, announcements, solicitations or Dear Colleague Letters) will be issued. Responses to any inquiries received regarding upcoming deadlines will be deferred until normal operations resume. All panels (including virtual panels) scheduled to occur during a lapse in appropriations will be cancelled and will likely be rescheduled to a later date.

BACKGROUND

Section 124.2 of OMB Circular A-11 requires all agencies to maintain contingency plans to deal with a possible lapse in appropriations and that these plans be updated and submitted to OMB for review every two years. This document serves as the updated plan for the National Science Foundation.

The OMB guidance requires agency plans to be consistent with the January 16, 1981, opinion of the Attorney General on this subject. The Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice issued an update to the opinion dated August 16, 1995. The essential elements of the Attorney General's opinion are:

- In the absence of new appropriations, Federal officers may incur no financial obligations that cannot lawfully be funded from prior appropriations unless such obligations are otherwise authorized by law.
- Under authority of the Antideficiency Act, Federal officers may incur obligations as necessary for the orderly termination of an agency's functions and for activities that protect life and property, but no funds may be disbursed for payment of those new obligations.
- Under its enforcement responsibilities, the Department of Justice may apply the criminal provisions of the Antideficiency Act against alleged violators.

SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

These shutdown requirements are applicable to NSF when the agency's appropriations lapse (regular, contingency, or supplemental) and the agency does not have other appropriations (prior multi-year carryover balances) available to cover daily operational costs. Given that the duration of a lapse in appropriations is inherently uncertain, this plan describes NSF actions to be taken during a short lapse (1-5 days). In addition, NSF's response to a lapse in appropriations is influenced by the other organizations and appropriations impacted, funding availability and transfer authorities for those appropriations, status of contracts and interagency agreements, timing and duration of a shutdown, and evolving risks. Therefore, this plan is an outline from which NSF will adjust as appropriate and in keeping with governing legal parameters; NSF may need to recall staff to perform additional functions as allowable by law.

DEFINITIONS

The following terms are defined because of their special significance to the processes authorized under these circumstances:

Excepted Activities – Activities which are authorized to continue in the absence of appropriations; obligations for excepted activities may be incurred but not paid until an appropriation is made.

Non-excepted Activities – Activities which are not authorized to continue in the absence of available funds; no obligations can be incurred for these activities and they will be discontinued until an appropriation is made.

Shutdown Activities – Activities which are necessary to transition from a fully operational mode to a mode which only supports excepted activities.

Lapse in Appropriations – The period of time during which appropriations are not available and only shutdown or excepted activities can be carried out.

Excepted Employees – Employees who are permitted to continue to perform their duties during a lapse in appropriations because those duties are necessary to accomplish excepted activities and who are therefore excepted from furlough.

Exempted Personnel – Staff are “exempt” from furlough if they are not affected by a lapse in appropriations. This includes Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) assignees, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Fellows, Einstein Fellows, Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) Fellows, and Sea Grant Knauss Fellows where the fellow is on detail to NSF from a non-Federal organization and the Federal portion of the cost is obligated from prior two-year program appropriations.

PLAN FOR OPERATIONS UNDER A SHUTDOWN

Shutdown Notice to Staff (and on-site contractors)

In anticipation of a lapse of appropriations, steps will be taken to ensure that the Foundation is in a position to limit its activities, first to those activities directly related to an orderly shutdown, and then to exempted and excepted activities. It is anticipated that shutdown activities will require no more than one half day, or four hours.

On the date/time prescribed by OMB, the agency will issue a notice to staff advising them of the Foundation’s general approach to the possible lapse in appropriations and addressing questions they may have. Upon a lapse in appropriations, the Director will issue guidance to staff to begin the shutdown. The guidance also will identify the excepted activities. Excepted employees who must continue to work during the lapse will be notified.

NSF’s total workforce includes approximately 1,900 personnel, including NSF employees, detailees, assignees pursuant to the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA), and on-site contractors.

- NSF anticipates approximately 290 federal full-time employees (FTE) will depart prior to October 1, 2025, through the Deferred Resignation Program and Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA). Approximately 50 additional federal full-time employees will depart through the Deferred Resignation Program/VERA prior to January 1, 2026.
- It is anticipated that approximately 130 federal full-time employees will be used to conduct activities necessarily implied by law, necessary to discharge the President’s duties, necessary to protect life and property, and otherwise authorized by law to continue in the absence of

appropriations. Of these FTE some will directly support polar operations which a) are funded in large part by no-year funds; and b) because of the harsh environment and limited access are also necessary to continue carrying out in order to deal with imminent threats to human life and the protection of property. Others will be supporting polar operations by necessary implication because of carryover funding. A small number of FTEs will support preservation of life and property at other large NSF-funded facilities and activities. And a last group includes OIG investigative staff who are excepted for potential criminal investigations and prosecutions. None of these employees are engaged in military or the direct provision of health care activities; nor are they compensated by a resource other than annual appropriations.

- There are approximately 250 IPA assignees funded through already-obligated financial assistance awards and 60 AAAS Fellows, Einstein Fellows, ORISE Fellows, and Sea Grant Knauss Fellows who are funded by their professional associations. These individuals will continue working off-site and without federal government employee support.

The numbers of employees represented here are estimates for staff needed to perform specific functions and may fluctuate over the duration of a lapse.

Notice to Funded Contractors

Contractors may be directed by the relevant NSF Contracting Officer to work under those contracts that are in support of excepted activities and/or excepted employees where funding has been obligated from prior year funds or in limited circumstances where multiple-year or no-year appropriation funding is available for obligation. Additionally, contract activities with obligated prior year funding may continue where ongoing Federal monitoring and the use of NSF facilities is not required.

Notice to NSF Recipients

As part of the shutdown activity, a notice will be posted to the Foundation's website informing recipients that work may continue on all awards to the extent that doing so will not require federal staff intervention and that funds are available.

NSF-Identified Excepted Activities

New obligations during the lapse in appropriations will be limited to those needed to shut down the Foundation and maintain the excepted activities, such as planning and preparation of the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget; necessarily implied by law to conduct and maintain an orderly shutdown and orderly reopening; and activities that are necessary to protect life and property.

No payment for new obligations (e.g., for shutdown activities or for excepted activities) incurred during the lapse in appropriations will be made without an appropriation.

- *Conducting and Maintaining an Orderly Shutdown and Orderly Reopening*
NSF's Senior Lapse Team will coordinate communications and actions to conduct and maintain an orderly shutdown. Information for recipients, panelists, and employees will be posted at www.NSF.gov and updated as necessary. NSF will also maintain a limited staff necessary to discharge the President's constitutional duty to participate in the legislative process.

Necessary personnel actions will be processed to separate employees in accordance with applicable law and Office of Personnel Management regulations. Preparation of employee notices related to the lapse and processing of personnel actions in connection with furlough actions, performance of excepted activities, or separation from Federal service are excepted activities.

Payroll will be processed by the Department of the Interior for those days worked prior to the lapse. In addition, the payroll records will be maintained to record the furlough status of non-excepted employees and the on-duty status of excepted employees. No payments for payroll earned or benefit costs incurred during the lapse will be made until a new appropriation is in effect.

Electronic systems for proposal preparation and submission will remain available for use, i.e., Research.gov and Grants.gov; however, proposals will not be processed until normal operations resume. *Ad hoc* reviewers will be able to submit reviews via the Proposal Evaluation System. All panels (including virtual panels) scheduled to occur during a lapse in appropriations will be cancelled and will likely be rescheduled to a later date.

In general, no new grants, continuing grant increments, cooperative agreements, or contracts will be awarded. The Award Cash Management Service (ACM\$) will be available to process valid payments from prior obligations. Recipients may continue performance under their NSF awards during a lapse in appropriations, to the extent funds are available, and the period of performance of the grant or cooperative agreement has not expired.

Employees who are furloughed will be encouraged to monitor NSF's website, listen to media outlets for government operating status, and check the OPM website (<http://www.opm.gov>) or OPM Alert app for operating status. Employees will be expected to return to work the day following the approval of a continuing resolution or annual appropriation. NSF will permit up to one day of unscheduled leave or telework to accommodate additional time employees may need to arrange childcare, eldercare, transportation, or other issues related to returning for work, with the option for supervisors to approve additional leave.

- *Protecting Life and Property*

NSF will maintain effective physical and computer security (including information technology and related equipment) for its Headquarters and related facilities. The guards will protect the assets of the Foundation and will limit access to those employees and contractors required to perform excepted activities.

Recipient-operated facilities with government-owned property will continue normal operations to the extent that funding was previously obligated. As those funds are exhausted, at a minimum, awardee-operated facilities with government-owned property and property acquired in whole or in part under federally sponsored awards will be required to protect life and property and/or provide for an orderly shutdown.

NSF designates the Office of Polar Programs' support of the Antarctic and Arctic programs as an excepted activity in order to respond to emergency situations that might arise.

The Office of Inspector General will maintain staff to support law enforcement and criminal investigation activities as well as monitor and respond to incoming calls to the OIG hotline, including any imminent threats to life or property.

Plan for Performance of Excepted and Exempted Activities

All activities defined above as excepted may be performed on-site or off-site by individuals designated as excepted by NSF management. All other agency functions are non-excepted. All activities defined above as exempted will be performed off-site by exempt personnel, as defined above.