

Report on Research Compliance Volume 17, Number 6. May 21, 2020 Inspectors General Launch Website, Prepare for Oversight of Research Funded by the CARES Act

By Theresa Defino

Jobs, jobs, jobs. If research compliance officials remember one thing from the reporting required for funds from the 2009 Recovery Act, it might be the difficulty of counting the jobs created by funded projects, in addition to the usual oversight required.

Surprise: The billions in COVID-19 response funding that universities are anxiously bidding for under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act come with a requirement to report on employment stemming from awards.^[1] And for those who might also wince thinking back on the parade of Recovery Act audits, too—bonus—the CARES Act will not disappoint.

As eager as investigators are to tap into the funding available from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and NIH, research compliance officials are struggling to understand all the strings that come attached to those dollars. No official federal guidance had been issued by RRC's deadline for this increased reporting, and funding agencies have essentially told awardee institutions to hang tight while the details are worked out.

However, recent remarks by an official with NSF and by the agency's Inspector General (IG) Allison Lerner at the May National Science Board (NSB) meeting will likely prove instructive.^[2] In addition, the CARES Act itself lays out a lot of the requirements and calls for the creation of an oversight committee that has already been established. A new website is also operational, although it will have more material and content in the coming weeks.

The NSB meeting, held via Zoom with members on video, was held May 5-6. As per usual, Lerner gave an update on Office of Inspector General (OIG) activities since the previous meeting in June. Lerner noted that, per guidelines, all agency employees and contractors who can work from home are doing so, an implementation she said had gone well.

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