

# Report on Research Compliance Volume 21, Number 4. March 21, 2024

## OIG's FY25 Budget Targets Awardee Compliance With Teaching Mandate, New NSF Initiatives

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Are recipients of National Science Foundation (NSF) funding complying with (ever-evolving) research security requirements—and is NSF? Are individuals with Noyce scholarships, which prepare science, technology, engineering and math majors (STEM) to become teachers, meeting their teaching obligations?

Is NSF properly managing and overseeing its public-private partnerships—particularly its Industry-University Cooperative Research Centers, based at five universities? Additionally, as NSF expands its use of contracts and other transaction agreements (OTAs), does it have the proper controls to make and supervise these awards, which aren't subject to the Uniform Guidance and requirements imposed on most of its other program recipients?

Finally, how well is NSF managing its fledgling Regional Innovation Engines program, which may award recipients up to \$160 million for 10 years?

These are just a few of the questions that the NSF Office of Inspector General (OIG) plans to answer through its work during the upcoming fiscal year (FY), as outlined in the White House's newly released FY 2025 budget request issued for Congress to enact.<sup>[1]</sup> As these examples show, OIG's initiatives in the FY beginning Oct. 1 will touch not only NSF but recipient institutions as well and can help awardees focus their compliance efforts.

Historically, Congress does not pass appropriations that meet all the White House's requests, but proposed budgets are worth reviewing not only for their requested funding levels but because they provide updates and insights on agencies' current as well as future efforts—information agencies generally don't otherwise disclose. In addition to NSF OIG's request, RRC reviewed the budget proposal HHS submitted for the Office of Research Integrity.<sup>[2]</sup> RRC will report on other relevant agency budget proposals in a future edition.

In terms of funding, OIG has requested \$28.46 million for FY 2025, a 21.7% increase over its FY level of \$23.39 million. The budget notes that its FY 2024 level was "TBD" (to be determined). In FY 2023, OIG had 93 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees and expects to hire an additional nine for a total of 102 in FY 2025, an increase of 9.7%.

"This increase will help OIG achieve critical audit and investigative priorities, and fund vital contracts, travel, and training," the agency explained. "Funding at this level would enable OIG to retain existing staff and support an additional three FTE[s]. The focus for the three new staff will be primarily on the expansion of our law enforcement mission and oversight at the U.S. Antarctic program (USAP) stations."

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