

OIG Description of Investigation Activities

Updated: April 2022

Concerns related to research security that may have led to a violation of laws, rules or regulations should be directed to NSF's Office of Inspector General at <https://oig.nsf.gov/contact/hotline>.

Both the agency and the Office of Inspector General (OIG) gather and analyze information, draw conclusions, and consider courses of action thereon. Thus, both can be said to conduct “investigations.” The subject matter, process, tools and procedures, and possible outcomes distinguish the investigative activities of the two entities.

The NSF Personnel Manual, section 143, requires that NSF employees report “*allegations of misconduct, fraud, waste, abuse, or corruption* involving NSF, NSF employees, NSF-funded research or education, or proposals for NSF funding” to OIG for investigation. OIG is responsible for the conduct of most investigations relating to NSF programs and operations that may result in civil, criminal, and administrative resolution.¹

OIG investigations vary in purpose and scope and can include the integrity of programs, operations, and personnel with a nexus to NSF. OIG investigations often require using specialized investigative techniques, including searches, seizures, subpoenas, and arrests, and require coordination with federal prosecution authorities to ensure an allegation is brought to a defensible conclusion.

As certain behavior undermining research security can constitute violations of criminal or civil statutes or administrative regulations within the OIG's jurisdiction, allegations of such behavior must be sent to OIG for investigation. Once OIG has had a chance to consider the details of the alleged misconduct, it may find that it does not raise the possibility of criminal, civil or administrative wrongdoing that requires investigation by the OIG, and therefore refer the issue to NSF for review and action, if appropriate.

¹ Allegations of sexual harassment or discrimination are the responsibility of the agency and are investigated by the Office of Equity and Civil Rights.