

OIG Management Activities

Outreach

Outreach is a vital component toward accomplishing our mission to prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse and to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness at in NSF programs and operations. To this end we undertake a number of proactive activities such as educating NSF awardees about their financial and programmatic responsibilities.

With the Director of the National Procurement Task Force, the Inspector General is leading a Suspension and Debarment Working Group under the auspices of CIGIE's Investigations Committee. The group includes representatives from the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, as well as the OIGs for eight other federal agencies.

This group is focused on ways to protect taxpayer dollars through expanded and more effective use of suspension and debarment. The group has formulated a comprehensive survey of agencies and their OIGs to gather baseline information about agency and OIG suspension and debarment practices and plans to develop informational materials and presentations for agencies and prosecutors to promulgate best practices, dispel common misperceptions, and enable well-coordinated parallel proceedings.

Recognizing that enhanced utilization of suspension and debarment authorities would better safeguard government interests, the Suspension and Debarment Working Group will hold a workshop in October to raise awareness of this powerful tool. The workshop will feature case presentations, training, and materials on suspension and debarment best practices, and will bring together OIG auditors, investigators, and attorneys along with agency suspension and debarment officials.

In addition to the suspension and debarment working group, the Inspector General is continuing efforts to address Congress's concerns about the persistence of fraud in the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program through a working group under the auspices of CIGIE's Research Misconduct Working Group.

In August 2009, the Inspector General testified before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation on the subject of waste, fraud, and abuse in the SBIR program. The Inspector General's testimony highlighted the importance of certifications in preventing and prosecuting fraud against the SBIR program. Certifications establish that the applicant was aware that providing false statements to the government is a federal crime. The SBIR group

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is focusing on several initiatives, such as developing a common set of certifications and a coordinated approach to using specific certifications throughout the lifecycle of SBIR awards.

Our office is recognized as a leader in research misconduct investigations, and we receive numerous requests from universities and others in the research community to provide training on the prevention, detection, and investigation of research misconduct. This subject has been increasingly recognized throughout the national and international research communities as critically important to the scientific enterprise. In July, the Inspector General made a presentation on research integrity challenges in a plenary session of the Second World Conference on Research Integrity which was attended by officials from over 50 nations. The Assistant Inspector General for Investigations made a presentation on research misconduct and research integrity and organized a full-day workshop on conducting research misconduct investigations.

Our audit staff continues to be involved in extensive outreach efforts. Most notably, our participation in the OMB workgroup formed in response to Executive Order 13520, "Reducing Improper Payments," led to several recommendations to enhance and streamline the Single Audit process to better support the overall effort to improve federal program accountability and reduce improper payments. The Single Audit process addresses accountability in several ways including identifying internal control weaknesses and areas of non-compliance and following up on corrective action for audit findings.

International outreach continues to be an important component of our outreach efforts. The Inspector General and NSF's Chief Financial Officer gave a joint presentation, "Challenges of Managing, Overseeing, and Auditing American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funds", at the 2010 International Workshop on Accountability Challenges. The presentation described the challenges of implementing recent legislation in the U.S. to combat the crisis in financial markets and to stimulate the U.S. economy. One of the primary challenges was to process additional research and education awards with no increase in administrative funding.

The primary purpose of the workshop was to discuss strategies to address accountability challenges, and attendees included individuals with responsibility for operating programs to administer oversee and/or prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse in government-funded science and engineering programs as well as government funding agencies and research universities and institutions.

Both auditors and investigators participated in a number of outreach activities covering a range of issues such as grant fraud, research integrity and misconduct, compliance programs, and projects related to the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board. Presentations on these issues were provided to organizations including the National Academy of Science, the Society of Research Administrators, the Association of College and University Auditors, the Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics, the Council of Graduate Schools, and the National Council of University Research Administrators, as well as NSF grantees, colleges and universities.

New Assistant Inspector General for Audit

Dr. Brett M. Baker assumed the duties of Assistant Inspector General for Audit in June. Dr. Baker currently serves as Vice Chair of the Federal Audit Executive Council. Dr. Baker is also leading an effort, in collaboration with the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, to develop a framework for OIG grant oversight.

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