



External Peer Review Report

January 28, 2025

Allison Lerner, Inspector General
National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Inspector General Lerner,

We reviewed the system of quality control for the National Science Foundation (NSF) Office of Inspector General (OIG) in effect for the year ended September 30, 2024. A system of quality control includes multiple aspects of an organization, including, but not limited to, policies and procedures designed to provide reasonable assurance of complying with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's (CIGIE's) *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* (Blue Book), December 2020 and January 2012 editions.¹ During this peer review, EXIM OIG reviewed three NSF OIG reports, two of which followed the December 2020 Blue Book and the third followed the January 2012 edition.

In our opinion, the system of quality control for NSF OIG in effect for the year ended September 30, 2024, has been suitably designed and complied with, and provides the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM) OIG with reasonable assurance of performing and reporting in conformity with the 2012 and 2020 Blue Book.

Inspection and Evaluation (I&E) organizations can receive a rating of pass, pass with deficiencies, or fail. NSF OIG has received an External Peer Review rating of pass.

¹ During this peer review, we reviewed three inspection reports and related administrative files. The NSF OIG issued two of those reports (*Review of the NSF's Antarctic Program Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response*, OIG 24-3-002, Sept. 23, 2024, and *Inspection of NSF's Passport Guidance*, OIG 24-3-001, Nov. 7, 2023) in accordance with the December 2020 Blue Book quality standards. The NSF OIG issued the third inspection report (*Inspection of NSF's Compliance with International Telework Requirements*, OIG 22-3-001, Sept. 14, 2022) in accordance with CIGIE's *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*, January 2012. We utilized the appropriate version of the Blue Book when conducting this peer review.

Letter of Comment

We have issued a letter dated January 28, 2025, that sets forth observations that were not considered to be of sufficient significance to affect our opinion expressed in this report.

Basis of Opinion

This required external peer review was conducted in accordance with CIGIE's *Guide for Conducting External Peer Reviews of Inspection and Evaluation Organizations of Federal Offices of Inspector General*, July 2023,² and the Memorandum of Understanding between EXIM OIG and NSF OIG, entered into on October 17, 2024.

During our review, we interviewed NSF OIG personnel and obtained an understanding of the nature of NSF OIG's I&E function and the design of NSF OIG's system of quality control sufficient to assess the risks implicit in its I&E function. Based on our assessments, we selected I&E reports and administrative files to test for conformity with Blue Book standards and compliance with NSF OIG's system of quality control.

In performing our review, we obtained an understanding of the system of quality control for NSF OIG's I&E function. In addition, we tested compliance with NSF OIG's quality control policies and procedures to the extent we considered appropriate. These tests covered the application of NSF OIG's policies and procedures on selected I&E reports. Our review was based on selected tests; therefore, it would not necessarily detect all weaknesses in the system of quality control or all instances of noncompliance with it.

Prior to concluding the peer review, we reassessed the adequacy of the scope of the peer review procedures and met with NSF OIG management to discuss the results of our review. We believe that the procedures we performed provide a reasonable basis for our opinion. Enclosure 1 to this report identifies the NSF OIG offices that we visited and the I&E reports we reviewed.

NSF OIG management officials provided a response to our Peer Review Report (Enclosure 2) in which they agreed with our overall rating.

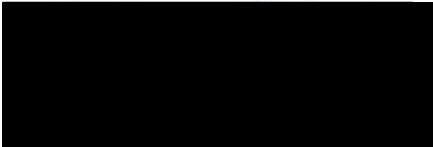
Responsibilities and Limitations

NSF OIG is responsible for establishing and maintaining a system of quality control designed to provide NSF OIG with reasonable assurance that the organization and its personnel comply in all material respects with Blue Book standards. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the design of the system of quality control and NSF OIG's compliance based on our review.

² One report started in August 2021. As such, we used CIGIE's *Guide for Conducting External Peer Reviews of Inspection and Evaluation Organizations of Federal Offices of Inspector General*, December 2020 to conduct our review of this report.

There are inherent limitations in the effectiveness of any system of quality control; therefore, noncompliance with the system of quality control may occur and may not be detected. Projection of any evaluation of a system of quality control to future periods is subject to the risk that the system of quality control may become inadequate because of changes in conditions or because the degree of compliance with the policies or procedures may deteriorate.

Sincerely,



Parisa Salehi
Inspector General

Enclosures

ENCLOSURE 1: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Until April 2024, staff from the NSF OIG Office of Audits (OA) conducted inspections on an as needed basis. In April 2024, a new inspection organization was created in OA, called Inspections, Evaluations, & Agile Products (IEA). At the same time, the NSF OIG OA changed its name to the Office of Audits, Inspections, & Evaluations (OAIE).

During this peer review, EXIM OIG reviewed compliance with the NSF OIG OA's (including OAIE and IEA) system of quality control in effect for the year ended September 30, 2024, to the extent we considered appropriate. NSF OIG's OA issued a total of three inspection reports during this review period. We selected three reports for review:

1. *Review of the NSF's Antarctic Program Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response*, OIG 24-3-002, September 23, 2024
2. *Inspection of NSF Passport Guidance*, OIG 24-3-001, November 7, 2023
3. *Inspection of NSF's Compliance with International Telework Requirements*, OIG 22-3-001, September 14, 2022

EXIM OIG conducted this peer review according to the *Guide for Conducting External Peer Reviews of Inspection and Evaluation Organizations of Federal Offices of Inspector General*, December 2020 and July 2023, and *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency in January 2012 and December 2020. EXIM OIG reviewed relevant documentation and conducted virtual interviews with the Assistant Inspector General and Directors for NSF OIG OAIE.

ENCLOSURE 2: NSF OIG COMMENTS TO DRAFT PEER REVIEW REPORT



U.S. NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION Office of Inspector General

January 21, 2025

The Honorable Parisa Salehi
Inspector General
Export Import Bank of the United States
811 Vermont Ave NW #911
Washington, D.C. 20571

Dear Inspector General Salehi:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft System of Quality Control Report for the National Science Foundation's Office of Inspector General. We concur with the rating of pass and the opinion that our system of quality control has been suitably designed and complied with to provide reasonable assurance of performing and reporting in conformity with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*.

We appreciate the dedication and efforts of your staff during this peer review. If you have any questions, please contact Theresa Hull, Assistant Inspector General for Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations, at 703-292-2116 or thull@nsf.gov or Ken Lish, Program Director for Inspections, Evaluations, and Agile Products, at 703-292-4230 or klish@nsf.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allison C. Lerner".

Allison C. Lerner
Inspector General