



Business Systems Review Subcommittee Report

Presentation to the NSF Advisory Committee on Business
Operations
May 9, 2012

Subcommittee Members

- Kathryn S. Schmoll (Co-Chair), Vice President, Finance and Administration
University Corporation for Atmospheric Research
- Dr. Richard Seligman (Co-Chair), Associate Vice President for Research
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- Dr. Steven Cohen, Executive Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia
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- Brian Fairhurst, Associate Director for Management and Administration,
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- Dr. Joan Fuller, Interim Director, Aerospace, Chemistry and Material
Sciences, Air Force Office of Science Research
- Gail Strobel, Director, Program Support Services, UNAVCO, Inc.

Charge to the Subcommittee

1. Assess the progress since the last Subcommittee Report, June 2008
2. Assess the new workflow process and pending changes to the BSR Guide 3.2
3. Identify opportunities for strengthening business assistance
4. Review a recently completed BSR Report

Background

- Purpose of BSR:
 - Examination of business practices at awardee institutions
 - Provide business assistance to awardee institutions
- NSF has conducted BSRs since 2005
- Two prior Subcommittees have reviewed the BSR processes

Observations and Recommendations

- NSF senior leadership must be clear about the importance of the program and the necessity for strong support across the Foundation
 - The LFO has been given inadequate resources to operate efficiently and effectively
- Experienced Subject Matter Experts are essential to the success of the BSR Program
 - SME's should include NSF staff and representatives from the awardee community
- A more focused consensus on the desired purposes and scope of the BSR is required.

Observations and Recommendations (continued)

- Agreement on what constitutes business assistance is required
- The BSR Report is lengthy and redundant, which lessens its impact
- More attention needs to be paid to the scoping activity at the start of the BSR process using a risk-based approach
- The BSR guide should be clear that a “good” BSR need not review all awardee business systems

Observations and Recommendations (continued)

- The nature of the awardee organization needs to be taken into account in the scoping, content and conduct of each BSR
- Distinction between a BSR and an audit are nearly impossible to appreciate. Similarities should be acknowledged
- It is important that the BSR results become part of ongoing post-award monitoring. A formal handoff from LFO to DACS is one way to accomplish this