

# OIG Management

## Congressional Relations

Recognizing the value of an independent perspective, Congress frequently calls upon the OIG to provide information, analysis, and testimony related to significant agency issues. During this semiannual period, our office responded to the following requests:

### Congressional Request for Top-10 Performance Measures

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) requires federal agencies to evaluate the results of their activities. For NSF, this involves evaluating and measuring the long-term results of basic research, a formidable task. But despite the difficulties inherent in measuring the success of basic research, NSF is making progress in complying with GPRA and devotes considerable resources toward this effort.

With little independent verification of GPRA data being performed, the validity and accuracy of the information that agencies report under GPRA have been a concern of the General Accounting Office, and consequently were included in the OIG's current list of NSF's major management challenges. In response to these concerns, NSF engaged an independent public accounting firm to verify and validate selected FY 2000 GPRA performance data as well as the process used in collecting and compiling the data and information.

In response to a request from the Chair of the House Committee on Government Reform, we selected the ten most significant performance measures contained in NSF's *FY 2000 GPRA Performance Report* and paid particular attention to whether the data underlying these measures had been verified and validated. In our assessment, NSF's ten most significant performance measures are:

- NSF's use of Committees of Visitors and Advisory Committees to review program practices, processes, and results for NSF's four qualitative outcome goals;
- Percent of funds allocated to projects selected through an external, merit-based, competitive process;
- Percent of proposals submitted electronically through FastLane;
- Percent of program announcements and solicitations available at least three months prior to deadlines or target dates;
- Percent of proposals processed within six months of receipt;
- Percent of competitive research grants awarded to new investigators;
- Efforts to attract job applications from members of underrepresented groups in order to increase NSF staffing in those groups;
- Comparison of facility projects' actual total cost with planned total cost;
- Comparison of facility projects' actual construction progress with planned schedule;
- Comparison of facility projects' actual operating time with scheduled operating time. (The operating time of a facility is a measure of its efficiency.)

Of these ten performance measures, the underlying data for six were verified and validated. NSF indicated that it plans to expand its verification and validation efforts in the near future, and have its independent contractor review the data underlying three more of these measures.

## Congressional Testimony

During this semiannual period, the Inspector General was invited to appear before two separate congressional committees to testify about several management issues reported on by the OIG. In June, Dr. Boesz testified before the Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies (Appropriations Subcommittee) as part of the hearing on NSF's FY 2002 appropriation. Additionally, in September, Dr. Boesz testified before the House of Representatives Committee on Science Subcommittee on Research (Subcommittee on Research) as part of a hearing on NSF's Major Research Facilities: Planning and Management Issues.

### *Senate Hearing on Appropriations*

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee invited the Inspector General, the NSB Chair, and the NSF Director, to testify at the hearing on NSF's FY 2002

appropriation, regarding the major management challenges that face the National Science Board and NSF over the next year. Dr. Boesz focused her testimony on three of the management challenges, discussed in the March 2001 Semiannual Report (pp. 4-6), that involve management of NSF's awards: Award Administration, Management of Large Infrastructure Projects, and Cost Sharing.

Dr. Boesz testified that as the nature and composition of NSF's awards change, new challenges arise in the way they are managed. These challenges must be addressed. For example, NSF should focus on the interactions among its program, grant, and contract officers so that information vital to managing awards can be shared. NSF should also identify those awards and institutions that are likely to pose greater risk and accord them closer oversight.

Additionally, because NSF is increasing its investment in large infrastructure projects, Dr. Boesz testified on the need for greater oversight and management of these awards. Finally, as first identified in the September 2000 Semiannual Report (p. 11), OIG audits are finding an increasing number of issues associated with cost sharing. Consequently, Dr. Boesz testified that improving its administration of awards requiring cost sharing is among the most important priorities for NSF management.

### *House Hearing on Major Research Facilities*

As discussed in the March 2001 Semiannual Report (pp. 6-7), NSF is in the process of updating its policies and procedures to strengthen the management and oversight of large facility projects. As part of this process, NSF is developing a *Large Facility Projects Management and Oversight Plan*. NSF has sought OIG input as it developed this Plan, and OIG has responded with comments to NSF throughout this process. In September, the House Subcommittee on Research convened a hearing on NSF's Major Research Facilities: Planning and Management Issues and invited Dr. Boesz, the NSB Vice-Chair, and the NSF Director, to testify regarding the OIG's recent review of NSF's procedures and policies in this area.

The IG testified that the *Large Facility Projects Management and Oversight Plan* is an important first step in the process of ensuring that NSF's large facility projects provide their intended research benefits while also providing appropriate stewardship over public funds. She further stated that the Plan represents progress toward laying the groundwork for all of NSF's efforts in the area of large facility management and provides a blueprint for future actions.

However, Dr. Boesz noted that awards for large facilities are inherently different from those that NSF makes to institutions for individual research and research projects and therefore require a different management approach. Her testimony focused on

several issues related to the implementation phase of large facility projects, and recommended improvements in the areas of accountability, authority, and post-award project management. The IG stated that the role of our office would be to work with NSF to ensure that sound business and management practices are in place in order to advance NSF's scientific goals.

## OIG Performance Plan

The OIG is nearing completion of our first performance plan. Built on the strategic plan that we developed last year, the performance plan lays out goals, performance measures, and strategies for improving the OIG's performance. We plan to use FY 2002 to measure our baseline performance and to use the baseline information we generate this year to set meaningful targets for FY 2003.

We held a two-day all staff retreat in June to discuss what measures, strategies, and actions we should give priority in FY 2002. The retreat built on extensive consultations among our managers and staff about the key areas in which the OIG should strive for improvement. We anticipate that the performance plan, which is based on the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act, will be a vital tool in managing our office, holding individual managers accountable for achieving goals, as well as providing useful data for external audiences interested in our performance.



The Inspector General responds to a question during a discussion of the OIG performance plan.