FY 2016 Performance Report

The FY 2016 Performance Report covers the period from October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016. This section describes OIG’s accomplishments towards the three goals set forth in the OIG Performance Plan for FY 2016.

Goal 1: Promote NSF Efficiency and Effectiveness

1. Identify and implement approaches to improve product quality and timeliness.

Quantitative Goals

- Complete 50 percent of OIG internal audit products performed by OIG staff within 1 year of the engagement letter.
- Issue one internal quality control review reports during the performance year.
- 75% of all investigative cases and FOIA requests are assigned to appropriate staff teams within 30 days of being opened/received.
- Investigative referrals to other offices or organizations are made within 30 days of the need for referral being identified and are conducted in a manner consistent with timeliness guidelines.
- Provision of legal reviews or opinions within agreed upon timeframes 60% of the time to ensure that the office’s operations stay within the bounds of governing legal requirements and that courses of action are promptly taken to minimize legal risk.

Qualitative Goals

- Ensure work remains on schedule through weekly tracking and monitoring of the status of the teams’ audits and other reviews.
- Issue the annual internal control and quality assurance report, as required by Government Auditing Standards.
- Review all OIG policies and update as needed.
- Review records practices and develop approaches for enhancements needed for accuracy or completeness.
- Data necessary for tracking and monitoring status of investigations will be provided to appropriate managers on a weekly basis to ensure work remains on schedule.
- Investigative Case Management System (eLoc) will be deployed, and staff training initiated, to increase investigative and case management efficiency.

Audits

Quantitative Goals. During this performance period, the Office of Audit (OA) surpassed its stated goal of completing 50 percent of OIG internal audit products performed by OIG staff within one year of the engagement letter. The Office issued nine reports during the year and completed 100 percent within one year of the engagement letter. The average time to completion was 132 days. OA also exceeded the goal of issuing at least one internal quality control review during the performance year; the Office issued two reports, one in June 2016, and the other in July 2016.
Qualitative Goals. OA issued weekly reports that tracked and monitored the status of teams’ audits and other reviews to ensure that work remained on schedule. In addition, to help ensure product quality, in August 2016, the Office issued the annual internal control and quality assurance report, required by Government Audit Standards.

Investigations
The Office of Investigations (OI) accomplished all planned substantive improvements to our processes and procedures to ensure that our investigative activities are high quality, timely and accurate, and of value to the National Science Foundation. We continued to carry a very high case load – higher than community standards.

Quantitative Goals. We exceeded our goal of 75% of investigative cases assigned to appropriate staff teams within 30 days of being opened/received. Over 90% of our cases met this standard. Further, we met our goal of investigative referrals to other offices or organizations being made within 30 days of the need for referral being identified. We developed effective communications with members of NSF management in order to meaningfully refer matters deemed more appropriate for agency action to NSF management officials. Because we have not yet returned to strength in our Administrative Section, we decided against establishing the Administrative S.O.P. We will consider drafting such a document in the future.

Qualitative Goals. Our new investigations case management system (e-Loc) has been completed and the system has been fully deployed. 100% of investigative staff have received initial training in the use of our e-Loc case management system, which is allowing OI to begin a transition to a fully electronic case management practice. Data necessary for tracking and monitoring status of investigations was successfully retrieved from electronic case management systems and provided to managers on a weekly basis to ensure investigative work remained on schedule.

Management, Legal, External (MLE)

Quantitative Goals. The Office of Counsel responded to 95% of all requests for legal reviews or opinions within agreed-upon timeframes or within two weeks (if no timeframe was agreed upon).

Qualitative Goals. Office-wide policies were carefully reviewed during this period and 4 were fully updated and/or established – Records Retention and Disposition; Telework; Workspace Assignments (one for the current location, and the other (a new policy) for the new headquarters). The new records disposition policy is particularly notable because it moves the office solidly into electronic records management, as required by OMB guidance and positions OIG well for the upcoming move to NSF’s new headquarters building. Notably, the records and workspace policy changes stemmed from intra-office working group analysis and recommendations.

A comprehensive SOP for SES performance management was drafted and fully implemented.
2. Strengthen our focus by refining approaches for selecting work and setting priorities.

Quantitative

- 75% of investigations are opened on a priority basis in accord with investigative management intake recommendations

Qualitative

- Develop the annual audit plan.

Audits.

Qualitative. OA issued its annual Audit Work Plan for FY 2016 on October 29, 2015. It is posted on the OIG website. The Plan explained the three major issue areas for FY 2016 audits and reviews: Relocation of NSF headquarters; NSF’s management of large construction projects, and financial and/or program accountability. The Plan also provided descriptions of projects OA intended to initiate in FY 2016, although certain projects were superseded by higher risk issues that developed during the course of the year.

Investigations.

Quantitative. We exceeded our goal of 75% of investigations being opened on a priority basis in accord with investigative management intake recommendations. Over 90% of investigations were initiated in accord with that process. All, however, were opened with appropriate investigative management input and authority. Investigations were initiated according to specified priorities. The allegation intake and review process, in which senior managers meet weekly to triage new incoming information to better prioritize cases opened for investigation, has proven effective. Applying established criteria to each intake has ensured the highest priority is given to the most serious allegations and those with likely substantive and significant impact on NSF programs and operations. Importantly, it ensured that our scarce investigative resources were employed with efficiency and economy.

Goal 2: Safeguard the Integrity of NSF Programs and Resources

1. Detect and address improper, inappropriate, or illegal activities.

Quantitative

- At least 90 percent of OIG- or IPA-performed external incurred cost audits and 20 percent of internal performance audits use data analytics.
- 20 percent of investigations include forensic analysis.
- 75% of investigations are opened on average within 14 days of receipt of an allegation.
- 75 percent of all investigations are closed within established timeframes.
- At least 1 written legal, legislative, or administrative process update transmitted to staff, which discusses topics relevant to OIG operations or activities to assist in mission support.
Qualitative

- Evaluate potential action under the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act (PFCRA) authorities in appropriate cases.
- Evaluate use of suspension and debarment for all cases as appropriate.

Audits.

Quantitative. OA exceeded the goal of using data analytics on at least 90 percent of OIG- or IPA-performed external incurred cost audits; the Office used data analytics on 100 percent of those audits. However, the Office did not meet the goal of using data analytics on 20 percent of internal performance audits. The Office issued only one internal performance audit during the year -- National Science Board Compliance with the Government in the Sunshine Act; and the use of data analytics was not appropriate for this audit. Further, the Office issued four inspections on NSF’s programs and operations during the year, but data analytics was not applicable for these projects either. However, OA did use data analytics on a follow-up review of costs associated with NSF’s use of executive-level Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignees.

Investigations

Quantitative. During this performance period OI made 55 recommendations to NSF management for administrative actions. We exceeded our goal of 75% of cases being opened on average within 14 days of receipt of a sufficiently documented allegation. Further, over 75% of cases were closed within timeframes approved by OI management.

OI exceeded our goal of incorporated forensic analysis into 20% of our civil and criminal investigations. During this reporting period, over 40% of our civil and criminal investigations included forensic analysis. The office effectively used our forensic audit contract to incorporate this forensic analysis in cases, as appropriate. These contract auditors worked during each month of this reporting period and provided valuable investigative assistance.

Qualitative. OI has participated in a government-wide initiative to increase familiarity with PFCRA authorities. As part of the PFCRA Working Group, we contributed to the development of a Practitioner’s Guide to provide guidance on PFCRA procedure and case management, and examples of key documents for use in PFCRA proceedings. We have participated in outreach presentations to increase knowledge within the federal community on this important tool for recovery of funds. With this strong foundation relating to PFCRA, we accomplished our goal of carefully considering each case investigated to determine if the facts and circumstances of the case and its resolution are such that we should recommend that NSF resolve the matter through such action.

Similarly, OI has participated in the Suspension and Debarment Working Group, a government-wide initiative to enhance the understanding and use of suspension and debarment authorities. We incorporated into our case management a routine evaluation of potential administrative actions, including suspension and debarment, in the resolution of each investigation. We regularly recommend
MLE

Quantitative. The Office of Counsel published 4 legal updates pertaining to: Business dealings with former employees, outside activities, litigation hold fundamentals, and records management. In addition to the formal legal updates, the Office of Counsel drafted and circulated a detailed document outlining a new process for legal review of contracting and financial obligation actions, a checklist for Contract Officer Representative files (to ensure that key records are maintained), and a checklist for staff to use to understand when to seek legal advice on ethics/conflict of interest issues that might arise.

2. Strengthen OIG proactive and outreach activities.

Quantitative

- At least 80 percent of discretionary audit products issued during the performance year address top management challenges or NSF’s high-risk areas.
- Investigations staff present at 75% of New Employee Orientations.

Qualitative

- Track investigations initiated through Proactive Review (PR) efforts to determine adequacy of PR planning and development.
- Improve availability of whistleblower protection information through outreach and education initiatives.
- Utilize PR group brainstorming sessions to generate new proactive ideas.
- Review Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training plans at selected universities and provide analysis to NSF.
- Utilize research-related blogs for identifying potential research misconduct cases.

Audits

Quantitative. One hundred percent of discretionary audit products issued during the performance year addressed top management challenges or NSF’s high risk areas, thus exceeding the goal of 80 percent. For example, OA issued 11 reports in FY 2016 that addressed that year’s management challenge “Establishing accountability over large cooperative agreements.”

Investigations

Quantitative. Outreach efforts directed towards NSF included New Employee Orientation briefings as well; our staff ensured that over 90% of such orientations included OIG presentation

Qualitative. OI continued to regularly track the number and nature of investigations and
management information reports (MIRs) generated through Proactive Reviews (PRs) to ensure investigations and reviews are planned and executed to address evolving priorities. Due to the continuing heavy investigative caseload, we have ceased the conduct of PRs. Future PRs will be conducted on an *ad hoc* basis, arising from brainstorming sessions at I-Group meetings, which are conducted at least 6 times per year. The pipeline of new substantive cases will continue through continued identification of PR ideas and through our outreach efforts, which encourage NSF program and financial officials – as well as members of the investigative and research communities – to refer matters to OI. Our office has continued its practice of incorporating up to date information on whistleblower protections into outreach presentations to NSF employees and to the research community. Further, we have updated the whistleblower protection information and resources available to the public on our website.

We concluded our review of Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training plans at 50 randomly selected grantees, as well as all necessary interviews of faculty, staff, and students. We are preparing to submit our report, including findings and recommendations, to NSF. Our intention is that this proactive effort will assist NSF in assessing the efficacy of RCR training programs and NSF’s compliance with the America COMPETES Act. Finally, our initiative regarding the monitoring of retraction watch blogs has been moderately effective in identifying individuals and institutions that warranted further examination by our office. We will continue to periodically monitor these blogs in the future.

3. **Refine financial investigative capabilities.**

**Qualitative**

- *Leverage existing audit and investigative information.*
- *Ensure timely and effective use of external forensic financial analysis.*

**Investigations**

**Qualitative.** Information flowing between OI and OA was effectively leveraged. Each office referred appropriate matters to the other and coordinated as necessary for the benefit of specific audits and investigations, to de-conflict activities conducted by each office, and to avoid any duplication of effort.

We have also effectively leveraged our external forensic auditors. OI has refined the process and employment of contracted forensic financial analyses to enhance the timeliness and thoroughness of investigations. We utilize a matrix management approach this process, incorporating participation of the Contracting Officer Representative, the Special Agent in Charge, and the Assistant Inspector General for Investigations. As noted above, our contract forensic auditors provided reports each month of this reporting period. Forensic analyses have contributed to numerous successful investigations, including some that have resulted in significant recoveries and jail sentences.

**Goal 3: Utilize OIG Resources Effectively and Efficiently**

1. **Strengthen and utilize the professional expertise of all OIG staff.**
Quantitative

- Analyze the 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results and develop plan for addressing any issues identified within 3 months.
- Have 50 percent of OA professional staff professionally certified (CPA, CIA, CISA, CFE as of September 30, 2016.
- Have 40 percent of OA professional staff with advanced degrees as of September 30, 2016.
- Have 10 percent of OA professional staff who do not have a professional certification working toward a professional certification as of September 30, 2016.
- Conduct I-Group meetings at least quarterly.
- Conduct all-hands Office of Audit meetings at least quarterly.
- Complete 75% of approved Individual Development Plan-related training for investigative staff.

Qualitative

- Identify residual functionality of KMS after e-Loc and Teammate deployment is complete.
- Conduct IT training, as necessary.
- Provide prompt, effective responses to requests for IT support.
- Identify and replace outdated computers, servers, printers, copiers, and related equipment as needed.
- Develop and deploy an in-house digital forensics capability to support the acquisition, identification, and analysis of evidence relating to OIG investigations subject to budget availability.
- Conduct exit surveys with all departing staff to obtain feedback on any issues and areas for office improvement.

Information Technology.

Qualitative. The OIG CIO and IT Specialist created a new MOU with DIS to continue to provide service to OIG servers including disaster recovery. The OIG is now scheduled to participate in the annual mock disaster recovery event in February 2017, which will test the ability to re-connect service to OIG’s servers when a disaster strikes. The OIG CIO and IT Specialist further refined the residual functionality for KMS after e-Loc (investigations) and Teammate (audits) development. This will include training, inventory, staff directory, management of FOIA requests, and outreach. The IT specialist conducted informal ad hoc IT training in the use of NSF, OIG and other systems and applications as needed. Although many routine IT support activities have been migrated to the NSF Help Desk, we continued to provide internal IT support to OIG staff for urgent needs.

During the reporting period, OIG replaced over half of our outdated computers with laptops to provide increased flexibility for staff. We also added high speed scanners to assist in preparing for litigation, and shredders to facilitate the reduction in paper files that will need to take place before our move to a new building. On the digital forensics front, the digital evidence unit analyzed .pst files from nine OI requests that will be supporting the investigators’ cases. Finally, the OIG CIO and other OIG
stakeholders attended two meetings with DAS on planning and preparing OIG’s printer needs for the move to Alexandria.

Audits

Quantitative. As of September 30, 2016, 44 percent of OA professional staff were professionally certified (CPA, CIA, CISA, or CFE); 56 percent had advanced degrees, and 13 percent of professional staff who did not have professional certification were working toward a professional certification. Thus, OA exceeded the goal for advanced degrees. Although it did not quite meet the goal for professional certification, it exceeded the goal for professional staff who did not have professional certifications who were working toward such certification. To enhance professionalism further, OA held six Audit-all hands meetings during the year – exceeding the goal of one per quarter. At these meetings, staff shared technical and programmatic information to further the development of office-wide expertise.

Qualitative. Three audit staff left OA during the year, and OA senior staff conducted exit surveys with all of them to obtain feedback on any issues and areas for office improvement.

Investigations

The Office of Investigations (OI) has effectively and efficiently utilized the limited resources available in these tight budgetary times in order to improve the performance of the office in the area of investigative activity, internal communications, and external communications. Our diverse and talented professional staff of Investigative Scientists, Special Agents, and Investigative Attorneys has demonstrated the value of teamwork and synergy.

Quantitative. During this reporting period, we exceeded our goal of completing 75% of approved IDP-related training. Over 85% of such training was accomplished through judicious use of training dollars and through concentrating on local training opportunities. We exceeded our goal for I-Group meetings as well, conducting such meetings on six occasions during this reporting period. OI completed all mandatory OI-wide and OIG-wide training requirements. Further, all training required by Attorney General Guidelines for OIG offices with Statutory Law Enforcement authority was completed. A training component was also featured in three of the six OI staff meetings.

Qualitative. Funds were not available to add a forensic specialist to OI. However, we have leveraged the talents of the OIG IT specialist to assist in the performance of basic computer forensic tasks.

OIG-wide

Qualitative. The office developed a process to identify, flesh out, and address FEVS-related challenges, which involved a review team consisting of staff members appointed from across the office. The process ensured broad staff participation through individual meetings the team held with employees and input that it received from an anonymous survey. In February, the team issued a report to OIG leadership illuminating the challenges (including those pertaining to
employee engagement) and recommending action to address them. OIG management has steadily taken action in response to each challenge that was identified. Among other things, responsive actions has included: diversity training, dedicated SES office hours, a peer recognition program, and a statement of principles for promotion and hiring.

2. Improve communication and collaboration within OIG.

Qualitative

- Ensure information exchange and referrals between the audit, investigation, and support units.
- Use office-wide committees for completion of various OIG projects and activities.
- Provide briefings on significant cases/issues at OI meetings.
- Review all OIG policies and update as needed.

OIG-wide

Audit, Investigation, and MLE staff continued to work together to improve communication and collaboration with their colleagues, accomplish office-wide initiatives, and achieve common goals. Regarding referrals, in 2016, Audit initiated an audit of an awardee referred to it by the Office of Investigations in 2013. In addition, Investigations made three referrals to Audit during the performance period; and OA made two referrals to OI; and members of both offices worked together on four projects. That collegiality was demonstrated in the composition of the OIG teams assigned to conduct liaison to directorates and offices within NSF, which almost without exception are made up of one investigator and one auditor.

In addition, OIG staff members participated in many of the annual office-wide activities, such as developing the FY 2016 OIG Performance Plan, Semiannual Reports, and Management Challenges. The Assistant IGs for Audit and Investigations met weekly to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Four collaborative working groups, consisting of members from across OIG, were convened during this period to review and make recommendations regarding the following matters: the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, workspace assignment procedures, records retention, and continuity of operations.

Investigations

As indicated above, OI worked collegially and effectively with other components of OIG. Internal communications were also frequent and beneficial. At over 75% of OI meetings, significant research misconduct, civil, criminal, or administrative cases were presented to the assembled staff by the investigators or the relevant manager. These discussions allowed all staff to remain aware of ongoing efforts throughout the office and provided an opportunity for staff members to gain a deeper understanding of the varied matters under investigation across the office.

MLE
Office-wide policies were carefully reviewed during this period and 4 were fully updated and/or established. These policies covered: records retention and disposition, telework, and workspace assignments (one for the current location, and the other (a new policy) for the new headquarters). The new records disposition policy is particularly notable because it moves the office solidly into electronic records management, as required by OMB guidance and positions OIG well for the upcoming move to NSF’s new headquarters building. The records and workspace policy changes stemmed from intra-office working group analyses and recommendations.

3. **Ensure effective external communications and consultation with our stakeholders.**

**Quantitative**

- Complete and accurate responses to requests for information within established timeliness guidelines and FOIA/PA provisions 75% of the time.
- Complete and accurate responses to media and congressional inquiries within 15 business days of receipt or by other agreed upon date 50% of the time in order to advance public transparency and meet congressional stakeholder needs.

**Qualitative**

- Produce timely external reports on OIG activities and results.
- Provide testimony and other requested information to congressional committees within a timely manner.
- Provide briefings to the National Science Board (NSB), Congress, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), NSF, and others regarding OIG plans, priorities, and progress.
- Prepare timely OIG budget requests.
- Update NSF leadership regularly on OIG activities and concerns.
- Collaborate with federal and international agencies to advance common audit, investigative, and management goals.
- Provide leadership and active participation in the IG community.
- Conduct active, effective outreach to NSF and the research community, including professional associations of higher learning and scientific research, to the degree possible under tight fiscal restraints.
- Post audit reports, which have been redacted as necessary, to the OIG website within the required timeframe after issuance.
- Promptly process FOIA/PA requests and appeals.
- Provide briefings to new employee orientations, program manager seminars, and NSF Grants Conferences.
- Review OIG website for necessary modifications and enhancements

**OIG-wide**

During the past year, OIG kept stakeholders apprised of its work by submitting all reports for which it was responsible by the required due dates, including two Semiannual Reports to Congress, NSF’s Financial Statement Audit Report, the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) evaluation, the annual OIG Performance Report and Plan, and
Management Challenges Letter. OIG also submitted the FY 2015 and 2016 budget request information according to OMB and Congressional requirements.

The IG and her senior staff met with Congressional staff engaged in oversight of NSF on multiple occasions during the course of the year to brief them about the OIG’s significant audit and investigative priorities. She testified in February on the subject of project management reform before the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Research and Technology and Subcommittee on Oversight Hearing. OIG provided timely and complete information in response to all Congressional inquiries and ensured that that written testimony was accurate, complete, and submitted within the required timeframe. Likewise, media inquiries were responded to in a timely way.

The IG also briefed the NSF Director and Chief Operating Officer at regularly scheduled monthly meetings to inform them of OIG activities and to discuss opportunities to improve agency operations. The IG presented at each National Science Board Audit and Oversight (A&O) Committee meeting about significant work performed by OIG, and met separately with individual Board members on multiple occasions. The CPA firm retained by OIG to audit NSF’s financial statements briefed the A&O Committee about the results of the audit. The AIGA also presented the annual audit plan to the Committee.

The IG and her staff actively led and participated in events and committees sponsored by the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE). In January 2015, the Inspector General was elected Vice Chair of CIGIE, and she continues to lead the CIGIE Grant Reform Initiatives Working Group, formed to increase accountability for financial assistance funds. The IG also leads the SBIR Working Group, which has worked toward establishing strong, uniform certifications, modeled on those at NSF that can be used as a means to improve the government’s ability to prosecute fraud.

Along with the Department of State Inspector General, the IG leads a Suspension and Debarment (S&D) Working Group under the auspices of the CIGIE Investigations Committee. This group works to increase understanding and effective use of S&D throughout the community in order to better protect government funds against fraud, waste, and abuse. The S&D Working Group has sponsored four workshops since 2010 that have focused on raising the profile of S&D, fact-based and performance-based, and total accountability including the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act. More than 250 auditors, investigators, attorneys, and others attended each of the workshops. A fifth workshop focused titled, “Suspension, Debarment and Coordination of Remedies: Effective Lifecycle Communication is the Key” is scheduled for November 2016.

The IG also continued to play a leading role in coordinating efforts towards developing a common understanding of the risks and challenges facing countries that fund scientific research around the globe. Finally, since 2011 the IG has served as a member of the Government Accountability and Transparency Board, charged with improving transparency throughout government and helping to fight fraud, waste and abuse.

**Audits**
The Federal Audit Executive Council (FAEC) discusses and coordinates issues that impact the federal audit community and focuses particularly on audit policy and operations of interest to its members. OA provided active leadership and participation in FAEC during FY 2016. Specifically:

- The former AIGA, who left OA in May 2016, served as FAEC chair.
- A senior audit manager was Chair of the FAEC Professional Development Committee.
- An auditor facilitated and coordinated all FAEC meetings during FY 2016.
- Auditors made presentations at the annual FAEC conference in September 2016.
- Auditors participated in FAEC’s Financial Statement Audit Network.
- Auditors participated in FAEC subgroups focusing requirements in the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014.
- A senior audit manager is Co-Chair, and another auditor a member of the Federal Audit Advisor Community for Enterprise Technology Solutions (FAACETS), a FAEC subgroup created in FY 2015 to discuss and coordinate the use of technology, such as electronic workpapers,
- An auditor made two presentations at the August 2016 FAACET’s forum.

OA also provided active outreach to professional associations of higher education. Specifically, in FY 2016 the former AIGA made presentations at the following meetings:

- Maryland Association of CPAs Annual Training Conference
- AGA and Greater Washington Society of CPAs Annual Conference.
- AGA and Greater Washington Society of CPAs Annual Training Conference.
- National Association of College Cost Accounting Annual Training Conference.

In addition, the acting AIGA updated participants at the National Council of University Research Administrators on OIG’s current audit priorities. Further, an audit manager served as an ex-officio member of the AGA National executive committee as the chair of its Professional Certification Board. In addition, during FY 2016, senior audit managers continued to track and coordinate Government Accountability Office (GAO) audits of NSF.

OA staff also remained actively engaged with NSF committees and organizations during the performance period. They continued to meet monthly with staff from NSF’s Office of Budget, Finance and Award Management as part of a Stewardship Collaborative, which focuses on issues related to internal NSF programs and operations as well as NSF awardees. In addition, a subgroup of the Collaborative met monthly to discuss more specific audit resolution issues.

OIG staff reviewed all audit reports for redaction of non-public information prior to their posting on OIG’s website, finding and striking the appropriate balance between transparency and legal protections from disclosure (such as those pertaining to personal privacy). All reports were posted within the 3-day period required by law.
Investigations

Quantitative. Our office has also effectively communicated with the public through timely release of information through our website and through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. All FOIA requests and appeals were addressed in accordance with the governing requirements. Modifications were made to the OIG website to create a more prominent FOIA link and updated FOIA information.

Qualitative. OI participated in numerous joint initiatives to develop policy for government-wide application. These included the DOJ Financial Fraud Task Force and its Grant Fraud subcommittee, the Interagency Suspension and Debarment Committee, the CIGIE Suspension and Debarment Working Group, the CIGIE PFCRA Working Group, and the CIGIE SBIR Working Group. We also served as co-leaders of the Interagency Research Misconduct Working Group. OI also participated in joint investigations with OIGs from across the government and have been a leader in the SBIR Agent-Level Working Group. We have provided joint training to the federal community at workshops and at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

OIG also continued its successful liaison program, in which staff members from different units in OIG are paired together to maintain relationships with their designated NSF directorates and offices for the purpose of promoting better communication and information about OIG’s mission. Together with staff performing New Employee Orientation briefings and presenting at NSF Grant Conferences and Program Management Seminars, our staff have ensured productive communications continue between NSF and the OIG. The OIG/NSF Liaison Program, in which teams of OIG staff members serve as primary contacts with directorates and offices within NSF, continued to demonstrate success. Numerous allegations were received through these channels. OIG initiated approximately 40 official events with NSF, in addition to numerous informal meetings and communications with NSF staff.

With regard to its outreach to the research community, OIG was once again forced to reduce the number of direct contacts with national education associations, universities, professional associations, and groups of NSF grant recipients compared to prior years due to budgetary constraints. We have, nevertheless, seized opportunities to present to larger audiences—especially when the event is in the local area or the presentation can be made through video conferencing or other similar means.

Modifications to OIG’s website were made throughout the year to improve the ability of the public to access information about OIG audits and investigations and to update important information regarding whistleblower protections. OI staff review all investigative closeout memorandum for redaction of non-public information prior to posting on OIG’s website.

MLE
**Quantitative.** For FOIA requests and appeals handled by the Office of Counsel, applicable timeframes were met 100% of the time. In addition, media and congressional requests were responded to within 15 days or other agreed upon timeframe 100% of the time.