



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A03010002

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On January 16, 2003, we received an anonymous complaint concerning an NSF proposal review panel<sup>1</sup>. The Complainant alleges: (1) proposal review was completed mid-day on first day, but the Program Officer<sup>2</sup> instructed panelists to sign in on second day to get paid; (2) not all proposals were discussed by the panel; (3) NSF staff attempted to bias the panel by telling panelists that the proposals were poor; and for a specific proposal, panelists were encouraged to raise their rating.

We reviewed panel records and interviewed the Program Officer. With regard to the first allegation, we determined that panel business was not complete on the first day. Although the panel discussion was complete in at least one subpanel, panel summaries remained to be written, and some panelists modified (or in some cases completed) their reviews. With regard to the second allegation, NSF does not require panels to discuss every proposal. With regard to the third allegation, the Program Officer stated that he characterized the proposals in terms of the ratings submitted by panelists prior to the panel. Panelists were asked to adjust their ratings afterwards to reflect discussion in the panel.

We found the conduct of the panel to be within the range of acceptable practices articulated in the NSF Proposal and Award Manual and other guidance to program officers. Accordingly, this case is closed.

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