



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A-03110072

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The PI¹ on an NSF proposal² claimed he neither wrote nor submitted the proposal to FastLane. He explained that he learned of the submission when it was declined via email from NSF. The PI stated that the institution submitted the proposal to NSF and used his Social Security Number (SSN) without his permission. He further suggested that some of the information in the proposal related to institutional statistics and participants' resumes was not entirely accurate.

NSF's FastLane Branch Chief³ verified that the institution used the PI's and co-PI's SSN's in submitting the proposal. Further, he verified that the PI and co-PI received emails confirming the receipt of the NSF proposal on the same day it was submitted as well as emails informing them when the proposal had been declined. The use of SSN's as identifiers and the sending of receipts and declinations to PI's by email are normal and routine functions in the proposal review process.

We learned from NSF's DGA that the institution had extremely limited experience with submission of NSF proposals. In fact, the one prior NSF FastLane proposal submission by the institution required significant additional processing and changes by DGA when it was funded because of several procedural errors made by the institution during the submission process.

Our review of information provided by the PI showed the proposal development by the institution was an open process and that the PI had been encouraged to participate and prepare some of the proposal materials, which he did. Prior to submission, the PI elected not to participate. Because of the educational nature of the NSF proposal, the institution was not precluded from listing the original PI/co-PI, although it would have been better if the institution had selected new PI/co-PIs.

We determined that the alleged factual inaccuracies contained in the statistics and the resumes in the proposal appeared to be the result of carelessness and inexperience on the part of the institution when it prepared the proposal package for submission. There does not appear to be any intent to mislead or misrepresent.

We received the results of an independent investigation completed by a local police detective⁴ into the alleged misuse of the PI's and co-PI's SSN. The matter was declined for prosecution by the local District Attorney (DA). Given the DA's declination and the institution's inexperience

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with submitting proposals via Fastlane to NSF, there does not appear to be any intent to mislead or misrepresent. We determined that this matter should be closed.

This case is closed and no further action will be taken.