



National Science Foundation • Office of Inspector General
2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22314

July 15, 2020

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly
Chairman, Subcommittee on Government Operations
Committee on Oversight and Reform
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Connolly:

I write in response to your letter dated June 15, 2020 requesting that we examine the plans and procedures of the National Science Foundation for returning employees to federal offices in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

In response to your request, we issued the attached memorandum to the National Science Foundation (NSF) on June 19, 2020 announcing our intent to review NSF's plans and procedures for returning employees to its federal office building. The objective of our review is to determine if NSF is employing best practices and existing guidance when deciding whether or when to require federal employees and contractors to return to the office. The review will encompass NSF actions from March 2020 through July 2020.

On July 1, 2020, we held an entrance conference with NSF to discuss the review and will be meeting with relevant staff to discuss additional questions in the next few weeks. NSF has provided all the documents we requested to date. We are currently reviewing Federal and local guidance on workplace safety during the coronavirus pandemic. We will evaluate these criteria, analyze NSF's policies and procedures, and inform NSF of any areas of divergence. It is our intent to issue the final report in October 2020.

Please feel free to contact me at 703-489-4784 or my chief of staff, Lisa Vonder Haar, at 703-292-2989 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Allison C. Lerner
Inspector General

Attachment



National Science Foundation • Office of Inspector General
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 19, 2020

TO: Wonzie L. Gardner
Office Head
Office of Information & Resource Management

Javier Inclán
Deputy Office Head
Office of Information & Resource Management

FROM: Mark Bell *Mark Bell*
Assistant Inspector General
Office of Audits

SUBJECT: Engagement Memorandum for the Review of the NSF's Reopening Efforts

In response to the attached June 15, 2020 request from the House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform's Subcommittee on Government Operations, the Office of Inspector General will be conducting a review of NSF's plans and procedures for returning employees to its federal office building. The objective of this review is to determine if NSF is employing best practices and existing guidance when deciding whether or when to require federal employees and contractors to return to the office.

My staff will contact you within the next few days to arrange a date and time for an entrance conference.

We are requesting the following information be provided to the points of contact indicated at the end of this memorandum by July 2, 2020. If possible, the information should be provided piecemeal as it is gathered.

1. A list of guidance, best practices, and criteria NSF is consulting to shape decisions on the reopening process. This may include, but is not limited to, guidance and key health metrics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and state and local governments.
2. Identification of those involved with making decisions on NSF's progression to reopening and their specific responsibilities. This may include, but is not limited to, a working group charter.

3. Plans, policies, and procedures developed by NSF for the reopening process, including contingency plans and guidance to employees. Draft documents are requested if guidance has yet to be finalized.
4. A description of NSF's access to and acquisition of necessary resources, such as coronavirus tests, personal protection equipment, thermometers, hand sanitizer, soap, workplace dividers, and disinfectant.
5. Protocols that have been developed in the event that an employee tests positive for coronavirus.
6. A description of all interagency collaboration that has taken place to ensure re-opening plans are consistent with public health and worker safety guidelines.
7. Any additional applicable information or data that is not included in the questions above.

If you have any questions relating to this letter, please contact Ken Lish, Director, Contract Grants Audits, at 303-844-4738, or Ruth Gonzalez, Project Manager, at 703-292-7917.

cc:

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