



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A11070048

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We assessed an allegation that a principal investigator¹ (PI) conducted human subjects research activities that were outside the scope of an NSF award.² These research activities were conducted without NSF's prior approval and thus there were concerns about human subjects institutional review violations and the potential misuse of NSF funds. The PI further changed the scope of the project by terminating a collaborative subaward,³ again without the requisite NSF preapproval. The original project outlined in the NSF award was discontinued by the PI who wanted to employ new methodologies.

NSF suspended the award and withheld release of the continuing grant increment of \$176,913 pending further evaluation. NSF determined that the human subjects research activities did receive appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) review and approval but the PI failed to provide NSF with the documentation. NSF required the PI to submit an erratum for a recent publication,⁴ removing the acknowledgement of NSF funding for studies related to the out-of-scope activities. The PI's university imposed several remedial training sessions on the PI and faculty, covering IRB and responsible grant management topics. NSF lifted the suspension of the award for the PI to complete analysis of the data already collected, and then ended the award. NSF recovered a total of \$171,156.56, consisting of \$50,309 to be returned for the costs related to the out-of-scope research activities, and the remainder as unexpended award funds to be de-obligated and returned. Accordingly, this case is closed with no further action taken.

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