

CLOSEOUT OF CASE M-99060031

This case was initiated after a program manager (PM)¹ spoke with us about an ongoing dispute among the researchers associated with a recently withdrawn proposal.² The PM explained that after receiving some criticism from the PM about the proposal, the PI decided to withdraw the proposal and he told the PM that he intended to resubmit it after addressing the weak areas of the proposal. Soon thereafter, a dispute arose between the subcontractor who prepared the portion of the proposal that was criticized as weak and the PI. The proposal was not resubmitted. One of the researchers associated with the withdrawn proposal called our office asking us to investigate potential misconduct by the subcontractor, alleging that the subcontractor had been unethical and had retaliated against the PI because of the PI's recommended changes to the proposal. The researcher contended that the subcontractor tried to have the PI fired and made public statements about the security risks associated with the PI.

We considered the allegations and determined that the issues in the context in which they were raised are not appropriate for OIG to address. Disputes that occur between researchers concerning the development or revisions to a proposal are private matters. Program staff can work, as appropriate, to encourage collaboration to improve the quality of a proposal. With regard to the alleged false statements made by the subcontractor, none were submitted or made directly to NSF, therefore are also outside of our jurisdiction.

Therefore, this case is closed, and no further action will be taken.

cc: Integrity, IG

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