FEDERAL GRANTS NEWS
for Colleges and Universities

In This Issue

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OMB's New Guidance Revises A-133, Makes Other Single Audit-Related Modifications

To assist college and universities in their ongoing efforts to implement the major grants management reform guidance published by the Office of Management and Budget last Dec. 26, *Federal Grants News* is highlighting sections of particular interest to college and university research administrators. The February and March issues (p. 1) focused on major changes affecting the general, administrative, and cost principles' requirements. In this issue, *FGN* focuses on changes to and consolidation of Circular A-133 and the single audit requirement, and the related impact on the *OMB Circular A-133 Compliance Supplement,* as set down in the guidance.

Among the eight circulars that were subsumed into the OMB guidance at 2 CFR 200 was OMB Circular A-133, *Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations,* which contains the requirement for the single audit. This requirement currently states that any grantee or subgrantee expending more than $500,000 in federal funds in a year must have an audit of these funds performed.

A-133 is the only one of the eight circulars that applies to every awardee. Similarly, the audit requirements of the new guidance — located in Subpart F — apply to all direct recipients and subrecipients of federal financial assistance and most research contracts that meet the established threshold. As is true of A-133, the single audit requirement as outlined in the guidance is not applicable to for-profit subrecipients.

As explained in its preface, one of the purposes of the guidance is to "reduce administrative burden for non-federal entities receiving federal awards while reducing the risk of waste, fraud, and abuse." The guidance also aims to concentrate audit resources, oversight, and resolution on higher dollar, higher risk federal awards while improving audit quality overall. Specific changes to Subpart F are meant to improve transparency

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President's Budget Tries to Provide R&D Increases Within Promised Caps

President Obama's fiscal 2015 budget request adheres to the spending cap agreed to by both Congress and the president last December. Increased funding, however, may be forthcoming from a separate channel, the president's Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative (OGSI), which would add $5.3 billion in research and development funding. Congress, however, has to agree to raise the current discretionary spending cap in order for this funding to be made available. Money for this program, according to the White House, would be offset by spending reductions and tax reforms.

The president's budget proposes $135.4 billion for federal research and development activities, an increase of $1.7 billion or 1.2% over fiscal 2014 enacted levels. As outlined by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, R&D funding levels proposed in the president's fiscal 2015 for various federal agencies and programs are as follows:

◆ ***National Institutes of Health:*** $29.5 billion, an increase of 0.7% over the 2014 funding level. The budget proposes $100 million for NIH's contribution to The Brain Research

through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative and $30 million for a new advanced research program modeled after the Defense Department's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

The OGSI proposes an additional $970 million, which would support additional new grants and increase funding for the BRAIN Initiative and DARPA-like programs.

◆ ***National Science Foundation:*** $5.7 billion, which is approximately the same as last year. The budget proposes $213 million for multidisciplinary research targeted at new materials, smart systems, advanced manufacturing technologies, and robotics technologies; $29 million for innovative proposals that combine biology, mathematics, the physical sciences, and engineering; $20 million to the BRAIN Initiative; $125 million for cyberinfrastructure; $25 million for the public-private "Innovation Corps" program; and $333 million for the Graduate Research Fellowship program.

An additional $552 million would be available to NSF in the OGSI.

◆ ***Defense:*** $64.4 billion, a 0.9% increase. The budget proposes $11.5 billion for DoD's Science and Technology program, which consists of basic research, applied research, and advanced technology development, and $2.9 billion for DARPA. DARPA plans to invest approximately $80 million in the BRAIN Initiative.

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The OGSI proposes an additional $2.1 billion for DoD R&D.

◆ ***NASA:*** $11.6 billion, a 1% decrease. The budget provides $5.0 billion for NASA Science. Within that total, $1.8 billion is proposed for Earth Science. The budget also provides $645 million for the James Webb Space Telescope.

The OGSI proposes $886 million in additional NASA funding.

◆ ***Energy:*** $12.3 billion, an 8.4% increase. The budget proposes $5.1 billion for DOE's Office of Science, $2.3 billion for its Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy; $325 million for the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E); an increase in R&D in support of the defense-related nuclear stockpile, nuclear nonproliferation, and U.S. Navy nuclear propulsion; and $25 million to support the demonstration of carbon capture and storage. The budget also asks Congress to establish an Energy Security Trust that would invest $2 billion over 10 years on cost-effective transportation alternatives to oil.

The OGSI would provide additional funds for DOE's clean-energy programs.

◆ ***Agriculture:*** $2.4 billion to support research, a 1.2% increase. The budget proposes $325 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's competitive research program and includes $75 million for three multidisciplinary institutes, with one dedicated to advanced bio-based manufacturing and another to anti-microbial research.

The OGSI proposes additional funds for USDA to support high-priority research and construction of a new biosafety research laboratory.

◆ ***Veterans Affairs:*** $1.2 billion, a 0.3% increase. This includes $686 million for the U.S. Geological Survey.

◆ ***Interior:*** $925 million, a 10.1% increase.

◆ ***Homeland Security:*** $876 million, down 15.1%. The budget proposes $300 million to leverage resources to construct the National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility.

◆ ***Transportation:*** $865 million, a 1.4% increase. The budget includes funding for several R&D activities in support of the Federal Aviation Administration's Next Generation Air Transportation System.

◆ ***National Institute of Standards and Technology:*** $690 million for R%D, a 3.4% increase.

The OGSI would provide NIST with $115 million in additional resources.

◆ ***National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:*** $688 million, a 4.1% increase. The budget includes investments in NOAA's ocean and coastal research and observation programs, while increasing support for habitat and species conservation activities.

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The OGSI would provide NOAA an additional $180 million.

◆ ***EPA:*** $560 million, which is approximately the same as last year. The budget proposes $14 million for EPA's research collaboration to reduce the potential health and environmental impacts of natural gas development using hydraulic fracturing.

◆ ***Education:*** $336 million, a 4% increase.

Cross-agency R&D Programs Are Funded

◆ ***U.S. Global Change Research Program:*** $2.5 billion.

◆ ***Networking and Information Technology R&D:*** $3.8 billion for this program, which provides strategic planning for and coordination of agency research efforts in cybersecurity, high-end computing systems, advanced networking, etc.

◆ ***National Nanotechnology Initiative:*** $1.5 billion to focus on ways to exploit nanoscale materials, devices, and systems.

Link: http://tinyurl.com/mdm9uza. ✧

Revised RPPR Will Be Used For Interim, Final Reports

On behalf of the research funding agencies that use the Research Performance Progress Report for grants and cooperative agreements, the National Science Foundation has published a *Federal Register* noticing revising the report. Once final, the revised report will be used when submitting both interim and final reports.

The proposed revised format retains the same overall structure of and categories in the existing RPPR. However, one new category is proposed — Project Outcomes. The notice states that this "category enables agencies to collect a summary of outcomes or findings of the award, thereby capturing cumulative information needed by several agencies." The category is optional for use by a federal agency and would be used by a grantee when submitting a final report only.

Other changes to the format include the addition of language to clarify and better target research activities. New information, questions, and instructions are inserted throughout the format, and updates are made to the RPPR Data Dictionary.

The proposed revised format is available on the NSF website at www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rppr/index.jsp. Comments on the new format are due by May 12. After obtaining and considering public comment, NSF on behalf of the Research Business Models Subcommittee, will request Office of Management and Budget clearance for use of the format.

NSF, the governmentwide "sponsor" of this RPPR, published the current uniform RPPR format in the Jan. 13, 2010, *Federal Register.* Federal agencies funding research have been using the existing format for interim reports, after adopting it subsequent to its approval by OMB in April 2010.

A working group was established in March 2013 to develop a RPPR format for interim and final reports. Representatives from thirteen different federal departments and agencies formed the group.

Furthers Consistent Reporting

The RPPR does not change the performance reporting requirements specified by a federal funding agency; instead, it standardizes the types of information required in reports. Each category in the RPPR is a separate reporting "component." Only the "Accomplishments" component is mandatory. The awarding agency determines which other categories or components are mandatory or optional for its awardees.

Recipients are not required or expected to report on each of the questions or items listed under a particular category. They will be advised to state "Nothing to Report" if they do not have anything significant to report during the reporting period. Within a particular component, agencies may direct recipients to complete only specific questions.

Agencies use the standard instructions and categories that have been developed for each category, but they

Quarterly Update Has Been Posted at www.ManagingFederalGrants.com

The following paragraph numbers were among those revised in the latest update:

- Section 300: Addition of information on fixed amount awards (¶302); updated information on award instruments (¶350)
- Section 500: Updated discussion of program announcements (¶512)
- Section 700: Updated discussions of certifications and assurances (¶750) and conflict of interest (¶753); addition of section on mandatory disclosures (¶757)
- Section 900: Updated discussion of agency review and negotiation (¶901)
- Section 1100: Updated discussion of standard provisions (¶1120)

For a complete listing of all sections that have been revised, go to the **Latest Changes** page at www.ManagingFederalGrants.com.

may develop additional program-specific ones as well. The notice states, however, that "to maintain maximum uniformity, agencies are instructed to minimize the degree to which they supplement the standard categories."

The RPPR results from an initiative of the Research Business Models Subcommittee of the Committee on Science, a committee of the National Science and Technology Council (http://rbm.nih.gov).

Link: https://federalregister.gov/a/2014-05012. ✧

HHS Should Delete 'Engagement,' Issue Guidance on Cluster Trials

If HHS adopts changes recommended by the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Human Research Protections, the word "engagement" no longer would appear in the regulations, a term that now triggers the need for a federalwide assurance and along with that, full compliance with the Common Rule, including approval of the research by an institutional review board.

SACHRP is also recommending that the HHS Office for Human Research Protections issue new guidance for informed consent and other procedures governing cluster randomized trials, a fairly new type of study that is not addressed. These two recommendations were approved by SACHRP members at their meeting in Washington, D.C., March 12-13.

The issue of engagement and FWAs flows from 45 CFR 46.103(a), which currently states in part: "Each institution engaged in research which is covered by this policy and which is conducted or supported by a federal department or agency shall provide written assurance… that it will comply with the requirements set forth in this policy. In lieu of requiring submission of an assurance, individual department or agency heads shall accept the existence of a current assurance…."

SACHRP is recommending, instead, that this section "be revised or reinterpreted in its entirety" and proposed language to do so.

SACHRP made three other related recommendations, including that "subawardees not be required to provide separate assurances of compliance, but that collaborating research sites (including prime, subs and unfunded sites) have the discretion and responsibility to negotiate the terms of agreements amongst themselves, depending on the circumstances of the project and the nature of collaboration. These agreements should address, among other obligations and oversight mechanisms, the number and location of IRBs needed to review the research. Subawardees should identify the responsible Institutional Official who is legally authorized to commit the institution to the terms of these agreements."

Change Could Ease Burdens

The recommendations were developed by SACHRP's Subpart A Subcommittee and presented to the full panel by Daniel Nelson, associate professor of social medicine and pediatrics and director of the Office of Human Research Ethics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Nelson said the proposed changes are necessary to address "a process that has evolved over the years" and now adds burden "without contributing meaningfully to the subjects." The subcommittee's recommendations would "turn that around and position that more properly," he added.

Chair Jeffrey Botkin called the issue "a wonderful example [of] how one word in the regulation can generate many hours and years of discussion" when the definition of the word is unclear. He was referring to the word "engagement." SACHRP's recommendations on this topic are "bold," said Botkin, associate vice president for research integrity, professor of pediatrics, and chief of the Division of Medical Ethics and Humanities at the University of Utah.

This opens the door for OHRP to issue guidance, rather than a formal change to the regulations, but which might face opposition from other agencies.

Member Suzanne Rivera, associate vice president for research and assistant professor of ethics for Case Western Reserve University, called the proposed change "fantastic." "From where I sit this would dramatically reduce the bureaucratic workload" that is incurred when subawardees are involved, and remove the "layers now that don't add value," she said.

The panel also agreed with Rivera's suggestion that the subcommittee "come up with a model paragraph that OHRP would say that is acceptable for prime awardees to add to the MOUs [memorandums of understanding] or adequately describe the transfer of responsibility and the expectations of the collaborator or the subawardee to comply with the regulations," Rivera said.

SACHRP's action on cluster randomized trials was to "provide recommendations to help the Secretary pro-

vide advice on the application of U.S. regulations to cluster randomized trials." These trials randomize groups of subjects rather than individual subjects.

The recommendations are contained in a 13-page document that the committee also approved unanimously. It includes a definition of cluster randomized trials, a discussion of when consent is and is not required, and a list of suggested changes to harmonize regulations with those issued by the Food and Drug Administration.

The two-day meeting was the first to be webcast. An archive of the broadcast will be available shortly on OHRP's website. SACHRP's next meeting is scheduled for July 16-17.

Link: http://tinyurl.com/n2j3pso. ✧

A version of this article first appeared in the April 2014 issue of FGN *sister publication* Report on Research Compliance. *Visit www.ReportonResearchCompliance.com.*

NIH eRA System Will Get Major Upgrade Over Three-Day Holiday

NIH's eRA system, like so many of us, is taking a holiday over the Memorial Day weekend. But, unlike many holiday-makers, eRA is actually going offline during the three-day period.

All related systems — eRA Commons, ASSIST, Internet Assisted Review, and others — will be unavailable to users from Friday, May 23, at 9:00 p.m. EDT, with "full service" expected to be available by Tuesday, May 27, at 7:00 a.m. EDT. The purpose of the shutdown is to welcome Unicode.

"Unicode is a computing standard that allows systems to handle virtually any type of text expressed in the world's writing systems. As a result of this upgrade, eRA systems will be able to accept Greek characters as they appear in the original scientific text submitted by grantees," according to NIH. However, it also warns grantees that applicants should only use these characters in PDF attachments, as "Grants.gov limits the characters allowed in grant application form fields."

As a result of the shutdown, many funding opportunity announcements with due dates in late May will be extended several days. For specifics, see NIH Guide notice NOT-OD-14-070, posted March 14.

Long Titles Are Now OK

NIH's eRA systems have been updated and can now accept project titles of up to 200 characters. Prior to this change, the system would shorten or truncate a title not to exceed 81 characters. Project titles are inserted on item 11 of the SF 424 R&R cover form.

In submitting a revision to an application, NIH reminds a grantee to use the exact project title displayed in eRA Commons for the awarded application. In other words, if the project title of the awarded grant previously was truncated to 81 characters, use that truncated title in the revised application.

Link: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-14-070.html. ✧

OMB Updates Audit Guidance

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and accountability by making all audit reports available to the public online and by encouraging federal agencies to better cooperate among themselves in seeking resolution to audits and improvements in internal controls.

The audit requirements of A-133 are contained in Subpart F of the new guidance, while other A-133 requirements, such as for subrecipient monitoring (Subpart D), are located elsewhere.

A number of substantive changes made in the guidance will affect those colleges and universities receiving federal funds that are required to have an annual single audit as prescribed by the requirements of Subpart F.

◆ ***Audit Threshold (200.501).*** The threshold for the single audit is increased from $500,000 or more of federal expenditures in a single year to $750,000.

The greatest impact of this change most likely will be on subrecipient monitoring, as many smaller subrecipients will be exempt from the single audit requirement under this change. As such, recipients awarding funds to these smaller entities no longer will be able to rely on the single audit for purposes of monitoring their use of the funds.

In making the change, the Council on Financial Assistance Reform indicated that the threshold increase would "maintain single audit oversight over 99.7% of the dollars currently subject to the requirement" and doing so will only delete about 5,000 of the 37,500 entities currently subject to the single audit requirement.

While these statistics may be true, and many small entities will be relieved of the burden of having a single audit performed, the burden on prime grantees to assure adequate systems and controls for those subrecipients that fall beneath the audit threshold no doubt will increase.

◆ ***Vendor vs. Contractor.*** Noticeably absent from the definitions section (Subpart A) is the word "vendor," which is used extensively in A-133 and in other circulars as well. The word "contractor" is now used and is defined as an entity receiving a contract for property or services needed to carry out the project or program under a feder-

al award. This does not represent a major policy change, but the change in wording is worth noting.

Contracts that fall under this definition are not included in the single audit. (Existing guidance on this point that is currently contained in §___.210 of Circular A-133 is migrating to §200.330 of the new guidance.)

Questions about audit coverage for contracts may arise when an institution has a contract, for example, under which an investigator is going to perform assays of samples provided by the government. The contract for such services would not be part of the single audit.

Exempted from the definition are those agreements that, while they may be called a contract, satisfy the definition of a federal award or subaward (see box, below). Contracts that don't meet the definition are covered by the single audit, as indicated in the applicability table in §200.101 of the guidance. For colleges and universities, contracts for research and development activities, for example, that are conducted similarly to how they would be performed under grants, but that may have more precise deliverables, would be included under the single audit.

Another aspect of applicability worth noting: under A-133, non-U.S. entities receiving funding directly or via subaward are specifically excluded from the A-133 audit requirements. Subpart F of the guidance does not contain a similar exclusion specifically, and it is unclear whether further clarification of such application will be made. For now, however, it is probably safe to assume that foreign entities are no longer excluded from the requirements.

Subrecipients vs. Contractor: An Important Difference

The distinction between subawards (pass-through grants) and procurements under grants (contracts) is important because funds received as a recipient or subrecipient are subject to the single audit requirement, while payments to a contractor for goods and services are not. As institutions prepare to implement the new Office of Management and Budget grants management guidance, now may be a good time to review this distinction.

Much of the confusion in distinguishing between a subrecipient of federal assistance funds and a contractor acting as a vendor to a federal grant recipient exists in part because there is a widespread misuse of the terminology. However, it is not the terminology that determines what the award or instrument really is, but its content — what it is intended to do.

Subawards of grant funds are subject to the same grants management requirements as are the funds in the original award from the federal government to the prime grantee. And, the prime grantee is responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements by both the subrecipient as well as itself.

Funds that a recipient awards to subrecipients are subject to the recipient's compliance audit to the extent that the auditor will examine how well the recipient monitors the subawardee to ensure that it follows all federal requirements related to spending funds under the original grant. However, funds expended as subcontracts by the recipient to contractors are examined in the recipient's audit only to determine if they were allowable expenditures and awarded properly.

Existing guidance on this topic, currently addressed in §___.210 of Circular A-133, is migrating to 2 CFR 200.331 in the new guidance. The word "contractor" — as opposed to "vendor" — is now used and is defined as an entity receiving a contract for property or services needed to carry out the project or program under a federal award.

It is important, therefore, for a prime grantee to make the proper determination. It is the nature of the relationship or transaction that is determinative.

The guidance, at 2 CFR 200.330, offers the following help.

Indicative Characteristics of Subrecipient vs. Contractor	
Subrecipient	**Contractor (Vendor)**
An assistance relationship	A procurement relationship
Determines eligibility	Provides good and services within normal business operations
Performance measured against federal program objectives	Provides similar goods and services to many purchasers
Responsible for programmatic decision making	Normally operates in a competitive environment
Adheres to applicable federal program requirements	Provides goods or services that are ancillary to the federal program
Uses federal funds to carry out a program for a public purpose specified in statute as opposed to providing goods or services for the benefit of the pass-through entity	Not subject to compliance requirements of the federal program

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In reality, however, the higher threshold level of $750,000 likely will exclude most of these entities.

◆ ***Relationship of the Single Audit to Other Federal Audits (200.503).*** While a similar discussion of this concept is included in A-133, the new guidance adds an interesting requirement. Federal agencies or pass-through entities must first review the Federal Audit Clearinghouse (https://harvester.census.gov/facweb) for recent audits and then rely on those audits if they meet the current needs of the agency or prime grantee. Any further audit work must build on that which has been completed already under the single audit.

◆ ***Report Submission (200.512).*** The change in the requirements for report submission is that the FAC has become the repository of record for the required reporting packages and data collection form. Entities no longer will be required to submit copies of these documents to each federal agency that provided funding or furnish information about their single audit to pass-through nonfederal entities from which they have received funding. All are directed to obtain the information by accessing the FAC. This change should alleviate some of the subrecipient monitoring burden on pass-through institutions.

It should also be noted that submissions to the FAC must be made electronically, and management letters issued by the auditor also must be submitted.

Finally, a "senior level representative of the auditee" must sign a statement included in the reporting package verifying that the audit was in compliance with the Subpart F requirements, the reporting package does not include any personally identifiable information, the information is accurate and complete, and authorizes the FAC to make the reporting package publicly available.

◆ ***Audit Findings (200.516).*** The threshold for the auditor to report "known or likely questioned costs" moves from $10,000 to $25,000. In addition to identifying questioned costs and how they were computed, auditors must identify known questioned costs by applicable CFDA and federal award identification numbers.

◆ ***Compliance Supplement.*** The A-133 Compliance Supplement, issued annually, is "identified" and cross-referenced in Appendix XI to 2 CFR Part 200. OMB has indicated that the 2014 Supplement will be published this month, but the revised provisions affecting the Supplement that are contained in Subpart F will not be implemented until 2015.

The Compliance Supplement is mentioned several times in Subpart F, noting that it is published separately by OMB and that any future changes to it will reflect past audit findings and identified noncompliance.

Audit Itself Is Changing Slightly

There are many technical revisions to the A-133 and single audit requirements in Subpart F that apply directly to federal agencies themselves, while others address the mechanics of the audit.

One such provision, for example, is contained in §200.518 and pertains to efforts to clarify and streamline major program determination. Others cover the criteria to be used when determining a "low risk" auditee (§200.520) and management decisions, which now are to be issued within six months of acceptance of an audit report by the FAC (§200.521(d)).

The audit requirements contained in Subpart F of the guidance will apply to audits of recipient and subrecipient fiscal years beginning on or after Dec. 26, 2014. That means, for example, that if an organization has a fiscal year that runs July 1 to June 30, it will not be subject to the Subpart F requirements until its audit for fiscal 2016, covering the period July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016.

Link: https://cfo.gov/cofar-reform-grants. ✧

Agency Developments

The following are summaries of news items posted in Federal Agency Daily *at www.ManagingFederalGrants.com. The date appearing in parentheses at the end of each item is the date the item, including a link, was posted.*

◆ **NSF's Future Plans.** NSF has posted its strategic plan to "guide" the agency from the current fiscal year through 2018. In *Investing in Science, Engineering and Education for the Nation's Future,* NSF sets out three strategic goals: "transform the frontiers of science and engineering, stimulate innovation and address societal needs through research and education, and excel as a federal science agency." The plan also describes how NSF will measure performance. According to NSF, this is the first year that all federal agencies are required to simultaneously submit strategic plans to Congress, covering the next four years, under the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010 (www.whitehouse.gov/omb/performance/gprm-act). *(3/11/14, 3/14/14)*

◆ **'Significant Changes'.** The NIH Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare is seeking comments on pro-

Agency Developments (continued)

posed guidance on "what is considered a significant change to an ongoing animal activity" as defined under the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. The policy holds that a grantee's institutional animal care and use committee must "review and approve, require modifications in (to secure approval) or withhold approval of proposed significant changes," according to NOT-OD-14-063, issued March 11. Comments are due by May 15. *(3/12/14)*

◆ **More on Research With Animals.** OLAW has also posted an archive of its March 20 webinar, "Oversight of Research Involving Wildlife." In this webinar, the latest in an ongoing serious of informational and training webinars, wildlife biologist Robert Sikes "presents suggestions" and a "sample protocol" to assist with the institutional animal care and use committee's review of such research. *(3/31/14)*

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology has issued a report and developed a website (www.animalrightsextremism.org) to counter "illegal, threatening, and violent action" taken by "extremists" who seek to put an end to use of animals in research. The report is *The Threat of Extremism to Medical Research: Best Practices to Mitigate Risk through Preparation and Communication. (3/19/14)*

◆ **Proposal Success.** Are the terms "success rates," "award rates," and "funding rates" more like Fuji, Granny Smith, and Delicious apples or oranges, peaches, and plums? NIH's Deputy Director for Extramural Research Sally Rockey discusses the differences — and similarities — between the terms in a recent blog entry. Her discussion is accompanied by several graphs that track changes in these rates over the last 13 years. *(3/6/14)*

In related news from a different agency, NSF reports that its fiscal 2013 proposal success rate was 22%, down two percentage points from the previous year. During the period, the number of proposals competitively reviewed by NSF increased by almost 400, while the number of new awards decreased by 6%, the lowest level since fiscal 2006. These stats and others are included in NSF's recent "FY 2013 Performance and Financial Highlights," an annual update issued in the first quarter of the year. *(3/26/14)*

◆ **Whistleblower Protections.** NIH is amending the terms and conditions of all grants and funding opportunity announcements issued on or after July 1, 2013, to incorporate the requirements of the "Pilot Program for Enhancement of Contractor Employee Whistleblower Protections." This program was mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Public Law 112-239) and requires all grantees, subgrantees, and subcontractors to (1) inform employees working on any federal award that they are subject to the whistleblower rights and remedies of the pilot program and (2) inform employees in writing of certain employee whistleblower protections in the predominant native language of the workforce. Contractors and grantees must include such requirements in any subcontract or subgrant. Going forward, all awards issued through Jan. 1, 2017, will include by reference these requirements as a term and condition of the award. *(3/10/14)*

◆ **New Director at NSF; No Director at ORI.** Frances A. Córdova became NSF's 14th director on March 31. Córdova has an extensive background in higher education and served as president of Purdue University from 2007 to 2012. Most recently, Córdova was chair of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution and a member of the National Science Board. Her term is six years. *(3/31/14)*

The HHS Office of Research Integrity Director David Wright resigned effective March 27, reports *FGN* sister publication *Report on Research Compliance.* In a letter to HHS officials, Wright, who became director in January 2012, cited a struggle to obtain the basic resources needed to run ORI, including the process of hiring an education director. To improve working conditions, Wright suggested that ORI and the Office for Human Research Protections both be moved out from under the HHS Office of Assistant Secretary for Health.

◆ **Training Researchers.** Two HHS offices have joined forces to produce a training tool for researchers. "The Research Clinic, " according to its developers, is a "Web-based interactive training video aimed at teaching clinical and social researchers how to better protect research subjects and avoid research misconduct." About one-third of research misconduct findings relate to clinical research studies, according to ORI. A related video was released in 2011 and focused on biomedical research, "The Lab: Avoiding Research Misconduct." *(3/31/14)*