



National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)/USDA

Agency Update

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Discussion Topics

- Personnel Changes
- Change to NIFA Agency-specific Terms and Conditions
- Indirect Costs
- Internal Controls

NIFA Agency-Specific Terms & Conditions

- Genetic Resources from Outside of US
- Release of Animal or Plant Genome Sequence and Distribution of Animal or Plant Genomic Resources

Personnel Changes

- FDP Program Representative
 - Margo S. Holland, DVM, PhD
- Director, Awards Management Division
 - Carol Langguth Retires
 - Andrea Brandon, Director, Office of Grants and Financial Management
- Chief, Policy Branch
 - Erin Daly on a 7 month assignment
 - Bill Bethel, Director, Policy and Oversight Division

http://www.nifa.usda.gov/about/AllUnits/staff_dir_search.cfm

Indirect costs

- 2008 Farm Bill limits to 22% of total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA)
- 2012 Appropriation act
 - limits to 30% TFFA for any ag research, education & extension
 - 10% of total direct cost for cooperative agreements if made to a nonprofit institution
- Chart

http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/awards/indirect_cost.html

Identified Challenge

- NIFA's Office of Grants and Financial Management (OGFM) leadership identified the need to streamline its operations and internal control as well as enhance internal quality assurance in support of efforts to achieve the following:
 - Optimize key controls within the Grants Management business process cycle to better support mission-delivery and more efficiently/effectively serve the agency's grantees and partner institutions
 - Drive a decreased rate of error in the agency's grants management lifecycle
 - Minimize adverse downstream impact of errors on mission delivery
 - Improve customer service for partner institutions
 - Create efficiencies and increase effectiveness in regards to the agency's annual OMB Circular A-123, Appendix A "Management's Responsibility for Internal Control" assessment

Executed Solution

- OGFМ leadership and staff utilized a risk-based approach to streamline control activities to ensure that the most critical process areas and key risks within the grants management lifecycle were mitigated effectively and efficiently
- Designed and implemented a new Quality Assurance and Controls Monitoring (QACM) program to regularly assess the effectiveness and efficiency of operations, the reliability of internal controls over financial reporting, and compliance with laws and regulations. Implementation of the QACM program also included the following activities:
 - Developed executive-view graphs/charts to monitor and track QACM results and key indicators of performance
 - Implemented and communicated the policies and procedures associated with the newly developed program
 - Provided quarterly reports that included timely reporting of risks identified and recommendations for improvements

Resulting Impact

- Strengthening/streamlining existing internal control activities and elimination of duplicative controls have supported OGFM efforts to achieve the following:
 - Reduction of the number of key controls within the Grants Management Business Process Cycle by 37% which supports OGFM efforts to focus more time on mission-delivery and customer service
 - Reduction in overall cost of compliance by 46% since FY09
 - Increased effectiveness and efficiency of its business processes which serve internal personnel and partner institutions
- Positioned to proactively identify potential issues/concerns and facilitate timely process improvement to the grant lifecycle in serving internal personnel and partner institutions
- Poised to drive more effective operations and proactive organizational/operational improvement along with excellence in grants and financial management
- Improved overall risk management, mission delivery, and customer service

Questions?

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