



National Science Foundation
Office of the Director

December 8, 2023

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Lofgren:

Thank you for your letter of November 16, 2023, regarding the National Science Foundation's (NSF) United States Antarctic Program (USAP). I deeply value the Committee's continued work and oversight, and I share your commitment to ensuring accountability and creating the change that is necessary to have safe and healthy research environments for all – not only in Antarctica but in all research settings and field sites. NSF is an extremely successful agency because of the amazing people who generate the incredible ideas that become the next great innovations. For them to do so, they must have safe research environments free of harassment, and NSF is dedicated to doing everything within the agency's power to make that a reality. That is why addressing issues of sexual violence, sexual assault and harassment is one of the most important issues that I am tackling as Director of the NSF, and we must be successful.

As your letter notes, NSF and the research community have been grappling with this challenge for many years. In 2018, the National Academies released its NSF-sponsored report on sexual harassment in academia. At the same time, NSF was aware of allegations of gross misconduct by researchers in Antarctica and elsewhere. As an agency, we responded immediately to the NASEM report swiftly with policy changes and resources for the research community. After receiving reports that raised continued concerns about the work and research environment in Antarctica, where the academic research community, contractors, federal staff, and the military all live and work together. NSF commissioned a Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevent and Response (SAHPR) report and action plan in response to these reports. Since the release of the SAHPR report in the summer of 2022, NSF has been working hard to take quick and deliberate action to address the report's findings and recommendations and to improve the safety and culture of the research environment in Antarctica.

In September 2022, NSF established a SAHPR program office to serve as single focal point for the agency. We issued the Action Plan for Antarctica and established the SAHPR Task Force who were tasked with carrying out that Action Plan, which was implemented through a series of activities over the next year. While we experienced continued challenges due to COVID and supply chain issues, NSF prioritized SAHPR actions, and we were able to complete all the Action Plan items by the end of the season. An on-ice advocate was deployed to Antarctica in October 2022 and listening sessions with USAP participants were held from December 2022 through February 2023. NSF established saferscience@nsf.gov in January 2023, a single reporting line for the NSF community and by the end of February 2023 all the physical safety upgrades were completed. In April 2023, the NSF Antarctic

Helpline, which supplements the advocate, counselor, chaplain and marshal stationed on the continent, was added as an additional resource for the community. These are only our initial steps in Antarctica. We will continue to make changes as part of an ongoing effort to address the community's needs.

In parallel to these and other actions, NSF also used, and has continued to use, the levers available in the Antarctic Support Contract to effect change. Our first goal was to ensure that our contractor understood our expectations that they and their sub-contractors must adhere to the codes of business ethics and integrity that are a part of the Federal Acquisition Regulation. We also made needed contract modifications, such as clarifying the scope of required reporting of sexual assault and harassment, requiring more frequent reporting with quarterly requirements, and expanded the level of detail required to be reported. This past September we added a SAHPR Office contact for streamlining reporting. We also updated the security adjudication process for hiring employees. I recently met with the new Chief Executive Officer at Leidos, and I reiterated my expectations for Leidos and all subcontractors for a safe and harassment free workplace and that retaliation for reporting will not be tolerated on the Antarctic Support Contract. We will be meeting monthly to ensure this remains the top priority.

We have worked diligently to ensure that a range of support and reporting mechanisms exist so that everyone in the USAP community knows how to reach the type of support they need. Much of what we implemented has come directly from the engagement with and suggestions from USAP community members, and we are grateful to them and ask that they continue to share their thoughts and ideas. We know that we have more work to do, and that creating real and lasting change will take a sustained effort, not just in Antarctic but throughout the research enterprise. Recently, I appointed a Special Assistant for SAHPR Implementation within the Office of the Director. While our initial focus for the SAHPR Action Plan must be, and will continue to be on Antarctica, we are now also moving into a broader implementation phase that goes beyond our responsibilities for the US Antarctic Program, coordinating the offices and directorates responsible for the agency's SAHPR implementation to ensure a unified agency approach.

Again, NSF values the committee's work on this critical issue, and I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your document requests and questions. The attached includes information requested along with proposed production dates and timelines for the remaining items. Please feel free to contact Amanda Hallberg Greenwell, Head, Office of Legislative and Public Affairs at (703) 292-8070 if you have any questions. Thank you for your leadership on this and so many other issues that are vital to our nation's leadership in science, engineering, and innovation.

Sincerely,



Sethuraman Panchanathan
Director

- 1. The Committee requests all email correspondence, reports, and any other documentation related to allegations of sexual harassment and assault within the USAP in the time period covered in Dr. Marrongelle's QFR responses from the December 6, 2022, hearing and all allegations since.**

These documents will be provided on a rolling basis beginning on January 1, 2024, with an expected completion date no later than February 29, 2024.

- 2. The Committee requests any and all documents that have been provided to any requesters via the Freedom of Information Act pertaining to the USAP.**

Please find these documents included under the folder for Question 2.

- 3. The Committee requests the Annual Performance Reviews (APRs) for Leidos since they assumed the contract, as well as any instructions or templates provided to the ASC relating to the APR, self-evaluations, or other factors that go into NSF's evaluation of the ASC's performance.**

These documents will be provided by December 31, 2023.

- 4. The Committee requests the current sexual assault and sexual harassment training materials and procedures required for NSF and its contractors within the USAP.**

These documents will be provided by December 31, 2023.

- 5. The Committee requests any sexual assault and harassment prevention and reporting materials provided by NSF to USAP participants over the last 5 years to communicate standards of conduct and reporting mechanisms.**

These documents will be provided by December 31, 2023.

- 6. The Committee requests any sexual assault and harassment prevention and reporting materials provided to USAP participants by any other entity - including the contractor and subcontractors - that NSF has in its possession from the last 5 years.**

These documents will be provided by December 31, 2023.

- 7. The Committee requests all Incident Reports and quarterly summary reports submitted by Leidos from August 2016 to present.**

These documents will be provided by December 31, 2023.

- 8. The Committee requests all ASC contract modifications that have been implemented since the publication of the SAHPR report in June 2022, as well as confirmation that all entities within the ASC have approved these modifications.**

A summary of NSF communications with the ASC contractor (Leidos) and contract modifications is provided in the folder labeled Question 8.

Leidos May 12 Response Letter

9. In Leidos's response to question 6 on page 5 of the May 12 Leidos response letter, Leidos mentions that they would be willing to share with NSF the names of the individuals that have been banned due to termination for sexual harassment or assault. They also informed the Committee that they are now screening ASC applicants and determining they are ineligible for deployment if they have been disciplined for sexual harassment or assault within the last three years.

a. Does NSF conduct a screening process of NSF applicants to determine if they have been disciplined for sexual assault or harassment?

Yes. There are two mechanisms to determine this. First, a new contract term added in September 2022 for the Antarctic Support Contract (ASC) requires that any potential employees of NSF's prime contractor or their subcontractors be specifically asked whether they have been disciplined for sexual assault or harassment by a previous employer or quit before such discipline took place within the past three years. These individuals are not eligible to be deployed to Antarctica. This is the screening referenced by Leidos in their letter response.

A second requirement of the Antarctic Support Contract is that all potential contract and subcontractor employees be adjudicated through the NSF vetting process. As part of this process, the applicant is required to complete the OF-306 which asks the question, "During the last 5 years, have you been fired from any job for any reason, did you quit after being told that you would be fired, did you leave any job by mutual agreement because of specific problems, or were you debarred from Federal employment by the Office of Personnel Management or any other Federal agency? If "YES," use item 16 to provide the date, an explanation of the problem, reason for leaving, and the employer's name and address." If the applicant answers 'yes' to this question, NSF's Office of Personnel Security will follow up with the applicant and/or the employer for additional information. Upon confirmation of any adverse information, the applicant will not be able to deploy.

Some potential applicants, due to the nature of the positions they may hold, are required to complete the e-QIP, SF-85, or SF-85P. These forms additionally ask about any issues with previous employers. Personnel Security follows up with any positive responses to these questions and answers. Once a completed background investigation comes back, if an employer responds with adverse information, Personnel Security follows up for additional information. Upon confirmation of any adverse information, the applicant will not be allowed to deploy.

A copy of the adjudication flow diagram for seasonal contractor employment is included as a reference for Question 9a in the folder labeled Q9 to Q37.

- b. Has NSF asked Leidos for the list of employees who have been disciplined for sexual assault and/or harassment or have been terminated and deemed ineligible for rehire, or has Leidos otherwise provided it to NSF since May 12, 2023?**

Prior to the release of the SAHPR report, Leidos was required to provide NSF with an annual report on all significant incidents that violated the Polar Code of Conduct, which included sexual assault and harassment. Some of those reports did include information on terminations. The current terms of the ASC require Leidos to a) conduct additional pre-screening of employees and subject all contractors and subcontractors to NSF vetting procedures (see additional details in Question 22) and b) provide more frequent and regular reporting on incidents and biweekly meetings with NSF on the status of reported cases (see additional details in Question 11). Both steps give NSF more insight into contractor hiring and personnel processes.

NSF did have concerns about debarment issues if we requested a list of employees (see response to Question 9c). While NSF does not have any employment-related authority over these individuals, prior to requesting a list from Leidos, NSF requests the opportunity to discuss with the committee the scope of information requested, and how NSF obtains and uses this information.

- c. NSF has previously informed the Committee that receipt of this list may elicit debarment issues. Please explain the legal concerns that NSF has with the exchange of individuals who have been deemed ineligible for rehire between the agency and the contractors. Please also provide any documentation to support this perspective.**

Section 9.4 of the Federal Acquisition Regulation covers general procedures for Suspension and Debarment. If specific individuals or instances raise concerns related to present responsibility, agencies may make a referral to the Suspension and Debarment Official who may consider a FAR-based suspension or debarment action after the appropriate due diligence is performed by the investigatory arm of the NSF's Suspension and Debarment program, the Office of Inspector General. Any steps taken that are not consistent with this process could result in increased legal risks for the agency.

- d. How does NSF track the NSF employees that have received a 3-year rehire ban pursuant to NSF policies and ensure they are not hired by Leidos, a subcontractor, or any other entity?**

Any report against an NSF employee on sexual assault or harassment would be subject to agency personnel procedures, regardless of work location. These procedures could result in the removal of an NSF employee from Antarctica (if that

were their work location) or more severe measures, such as termination from federal employment. NSF does not have a blanket rehire ban for NSF employees separated from the agency. NSF's screening process (explained in Q9a) provides multiple mechanisms to ensure that an NSF employee who was removed from Antarctica due to an incident of sexual assault or harassment and then was hired by Leidos or its subcontractors is not able to redeploy. First, Leidos or its subcontractors would be required to pre-screen for a prior removal for Antarctica. Second, the individual would be required to complete federal form OF-306, where they must report prior adverse events that led to them being fired, quitting before discipline, etc. False reporting on this form is a violation of federal law. NSF's adjudication and review process for vetting individuals prior to deployment ensures safeguards to capture this information. Please see the attachment to Question 9a for our vetting flow diagram.

10. In the oversight responses that are detailed on page 7 of the May 12 Leidos response letter, Leidos describes the monthly meetings between their management and human resources representatives of the subcontractors to review each reported incident and the associated resolution.

a. Is NSF involved in these meetings? Does NSF get updates from these weekly meetings?

While NSF is not involved in the internal meetings between Leidos and its subcontractors, NSF meets bi-weekly with Leidos on SAHPR. The purpose of these meetings is for NSF to receive a status update on the 'significant events' provided to NSF as a part of Leidos' mandatory reporting requirements.

b. Is NSF aware of the changes made to the HR reporting policies that Leidos claims have been made?

NSF requires the ASC to provide the agency with a comprehensive list of policies annually as a contract deliverable. This has allowed NSF to provide more rigorous oversight of concerns raised by the SAHPR report and by the community. For example, we have received Leidos' new incident reporting policy. Another example is an update to their Deployment Pay Policy that includes guidance on time charging while deployed to a station or vessel, which we requested in response to an Office of Inspector General (OIG) referral.

11. In the incident that was reported in 2019 and discussed on page 2 of the Leidos response letter, Leidos stated that the claim was unsubstantiated. Was NSF aware of this determination and notified as to how Leidos made this decision?

Please see the responses below for details on reporting to NSF on this incident. This incident, as well as other concerning information shared with NSF Headquarters staff in [REDACTED] 2020 prompted NSF to commission the SAHPR report (which was released in June 2022). NSF's goal for this report was to generate a comprehensive evaluation of SAHPR-related issues in USAP; the report, in turn informed our initial Action Plan and follow-up activities.

a. Does NSF know what procedures were followed in this investigation?

When NSF Headquarters staff were made aware of the incident during their deployment to McMurdo in [REDACTED] 2020 by the ASC Area Manager (a Leidos employee), NSF was informed that the employer [REDACTED] had already completed their investigation. Because of concerns raised by the Area Manager, NSF asked Leidos if they intended to review [REDACTED] actions related to the event, and Leidos said they would. NSF was provided a summary of the oversight review conducted by Leidos on [REDACTED] 2020, in which they concluded the subcontractor "appears to have taken all concerns seriously and engaged their policies/procedures appropriately." NSF did not have a policy or mechanism in place at that time for independently confirming the findings of contractor-led investigations.

b. How engaged and involved was NSF in this investigation?

NSF headquarters staff were not engaged in the investigation conducted by [REDACTED] or the third-party review conducted by Leidos. If the victim/survivor had made a report to the NSF Station Manager, it would have been investigated under the supervision of the Department of Justice as a law enforcement action.

c. At what point was NSF notified of this incident?

NSF Headquarters staff was made aware of the incident during their deployment to McMurdo in [REDACTED] 2020 by the ASC Area Manager in McMurdo, a Leidos employee.

d. Did NSF review the findings of the investigation and reach the same conclusion?

NSF did not have a policy or mechanism in place at that time for independently confirming the findings of contractor-led investigations, but we did receive the summary.

e. Does NSF verify the conclusions of investigations conducted by contractors and subcontractors or simply accept that the contractor process was followed?

NSF reviews the actions taken by ASC in the investigation and resolution of SAHPR reports. When appropriate, NSF requests additional information on the resolution of a matter or that additional action be taken by ASC to resolve a matter.

NSF has now established a SAHPR Incident Review Team (SIRT) which meets monthly to review SAHPR case progress, and NSF meets with ASC on a biweekly basis to review and discuss open SAHPR cases. In addition, we will be evaluating possible mechanisms to independently confirm contractor-led investigations for sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking.

f. What documentation was reviewed to reach this determination? Please provide all evidence to validate this determination.

NSF received a summary of Leidos' review of GSC's actions for the incident in question, but we did not have a mechanism to independently confirm their findings. A primary driver for NSF's decision to commission the SAHPR report was to develop options to be responsive to the concerns we heard from the community in 2020. One of the first steps NSF took with Leidos last fall was to require the ASC to provide quarterly reports with data on each incident (which includes Leidos and its subcontractors). This data is one input that will allow NSF to begin evaluating the mechanisms we will need to provide more oversight of ASC contract requirements and NSF expectations on appropriately responding to reports of sexual assault, harassment, and stalking. The information NSF is now requesting includes:

- Fiscal Year (FY)
- Date of Receipt: date the complaint/report was received by the Contractor's leadership.
- Date that NSF/SaferScience@nsf.gov was notified
- Unique Case Number (provided by NSF SAHPR office after notification)
- Station
- Incident Description
- Complainant Organization: employing organization of the Complainant (i.e., victim)
- Respondent Organization: employing organization of the Respondent (i.e., perpetrator)
- Investigative Process
- Date Incident Occurred
- Information Provided to Complainant on Support Resources: did the Contractor provide information to the Complainant on how to request support resources (Y/N) *If no, include background information in "Outcome" field
- After-action follow-up to relevant community members (Y/N): did the Contractor provide a closure/status update on outcome to the reporting party and/or the Complainant (victim), when known?

- Closure Date
- Outcome

This information is used to review and discuss the status of SAHPR cases by the SIRT and during NSF's biweekly meetings with ASC.

g. Did NSF agree the claim was unsubstantiated?

NSF did not have a policy or mechanism in place at that time for independently confirming the findings of contractor-led investigations into such matters.

h. What steps were taken to address the concerns of the community regarding the claims of retaliation for the filing of a report?

In response to concerns expressed by the community regarding retaliation, NSF has taken the following steps:

- Information about where to report complaints of retaliation was sent to all USAP participants, as were reminders that retaliation is prohibited. In December 2022, NSF developed and distributed an [informational resource for USAP participants on unlawful retaliation](#). The resource can be found on NSF's public facing website under *Reporting Options for the USAP Community* at <https://new.nsf.gov/stopping-harassment/sahpr>. Additionally, reminders that retaliation is prohibited were shared with the community. Instances of retaliation can be reported to the SAHPR Office at saferscience@nsf.gov.
- Social retaliation scenarios were added to the mandatory Bystander Intervention Training required for all deployers, to build awareness across the community.
- Focused discussion with new Leidos CEO on ensuring total cooperation on all aspects of reporting and ensuring compliance with expectations on preventing retaliation.

Sexual Assault/Harassment Procedures

12. Please describe how the sexual assault and sexual harassment report procedures changed following the release of the Sexual Assault/Harassment Prevention and Response (SAHPR) report.

NSF's long-standing goal is to ensure a safe and productive environment for scientists, support personnel, and visitors who participate in USAP activities. Following the release of the SAHPR report, the NSF Director established the SAHPR Program Office within the Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) to serve as the centralized communication point for USAP sexual assault and harassment reporting, ensuring matters are appropriately referred and providing access to resources to address sexual assault and harassment. A detailed SAHPR

flow diagram on all reporting options for the USAP community is attached as a reference for Q12, in the folder labeled Q9 to Q37.

NSF also updated ASC contract requirements to ensure Leidos reports any “significant events” to include known sexual assault or sexual harassment issues to NSF and provides quarterly status updates on each case. NSF also reaffirmed contract expectations to reinforce that all NSF policies and practices flow down to subcontractors.

Additionally, the SAHPR Program Office works across all major USAP Partners (to include contractors, institutions, military, and other federal agencies) to help ensure that individuals who commit sexual assault or sexual harassment are held accountable based on the most relevant organizational policies and legal standards.

In November 2023, the NSF Director appointed Renée V. Ferranti to the position of Special Assistant to the Director for Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention and Response Implementation. Ms. Ferranti has over 25 years of experience working in victim advocacy and sexual assault and harassment prevention. In her role, Ms. Ferranti leads in NSF's Office of the Director for SAHPR and coordinates with each of the offices and directorates responsible for the agency's SAHPR programs to ensure a unified agency approach.

13. What were the sexual assault and sexual harassment resources available to individuals within the USAP before and after the SAHPR report?

Resources available before NSF initiated the SAHPR Report:

- USAP Licensed Clinical Counselor: Provides confidential mental health support and services.
- Military Chaplain
- Station Medical Services
- Special Deputy US Marshal (who was also the NSF Station Manager) and other deployed NSF staff (e.g., NSF Science Representative)
- NSF Office of Inspector General
- NSF Office of Equity and Civil Rights
- Employer resources such as employee assistance programs (EAPs), Ethics Officials, HR officials, and Supervisor. These employee resources are specific to an individual's employer: contractors, subcontractors, military, academic and federal (NSF or other agencies).

Additional resources established by NSF following the release of the SAHPR report:

- USAP Victim Advocate: Beginning on October 25, 2022, NSF deployed an on-ice advocate to Antarctica (USAP Victim Advocate) who is an independent, confidential resource with the necessary expertise to support all survivors of harassment, assault, or bullying behaviors. The advocate provides confidential information about safety planning, reporting, possible accommodations, and other support services. The advocate will be a continuous presence in Antarctica, through a series of rotational tours of multiple individuals. The on-ice advocate is accessible in-person but can also be reached by phone from the South Pole Station, Palmer Station, or field sites.
- In January 2023, OECR established the saferscience@nsf.gov, a direct reporting channel to NSF.
- [NSF Antarctic Helpline](#): Beginning in April 2023, this helpline was initiated to provide immediate, 24/7 access to crisis intervention and emotional support via phone, chat, or text.

NSF is taking proactive efforts to publicize the availability of the on-ice resources through USAP publications, information materials posted throughout NSF's three stations, and through digital communication channels.

14. What communications regarding the legal remedies available to victims of sexual assault and harassment are provided to individuals on the ice? Please provide copies of these resources to the Committee.

In November 2022, NSF developed an informational resource that provides a summarized overview of the legal landscape related to sexual assault and sexual harassment. The document was provided to the Victim Advocate and Mental Health Counselor to be used and distributed on an as-needed basis. This document is attached as a reference for Q14, in the folder labeled Q9 to Q37.

In December 2022, NSF developed and distributed an [informational resource for USAP participants on unlawful retaliation](#). The resource can be found on NSF's public facing website under *Reporting Options for the USAP Community* at <https://new.nsf.gov/stopping-harassment/sahpr>.

In addition, during the 2023-2024 summer season, the NSF SAHPR Office and NSF OIG provided four joint presentations to the USAP community about SAHPR reporting and investigating.

NSF has been engaging with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Department of Labor to clarify the additional administrative remedies and processes available to USAP participants. The SAHPR Office also consults with individuals that report directly to NSF on potential avenues and pathways of redress.

15. Are all available resources for sexual assault and harassment provided to employees through the onboarding and deployment training sessions?

Gateway (Christchurch and Punta Arenas) arrival information provided to every deployer includes a SAHPR Resources Flyer. Bystander Intervention Training is delivered at the deployment gateway. Each station and vessel has multiple postings (including on station intranets) regarding resources available. USAP participants receive station guides during the onboarding process which include information about NSF's SAHPR Office and support resources.

Beginning in October 2023, during the deployment process, the SAHPR Office handed out contact cards with a QR code to the new SAHPR website and the NSF reporting email, saferscience@nsf.gov. In future seasons, these cards will be a recurring resource that is handed out during the deployment process for each station. The newly implemented (October 2023) SAHPR Response training also provides resource information.

a. If there are other methods and instances of communication to the contractor, subcontractors, and USAP employees, what are they?

In October 2023, NSF updated its public facing Stopping Harassment and Assault website with SAHPR-related information and created a new page, titled "[Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention and Response in the U.S. Antarctic Program.](#)" These updates and additions included information about the NSF reporting options and support resources.

b. Are the contractor and subcontractors required to communicate the available resources for sexual assault and harassment, or do all communications come from NSF?

NSF's contract requirements are that all NSF policies and procedures must flow down to contracting staff and subcontractors and their staff. The Antarctic Support Contract does not include a specific requirement to post SAHPR notices. However, there are more general requirements in the contract that include items such as the reporting of fraud and workplace safety, which are posted as applicable. The ASC has a regular newsletter that is distributed to employees. They have used that newsletter to communicate about SAHPR resources. NSF has confirmed that all public and communal spaces prominently display information about the availability of SAHPR resources.

c. How is NSF ensuring the availability of resources to individuals in the USAP?

NSF uses multiple modes of communication, at multiple times throughout the deployment lifecycle to ensure awareness and availability of information to all deployers.

d. How are these documents and resources made available after the training?

In addition to information and resources included on USAP's intranet site, NSF's public webpage, "[Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention and Response in the U.S. Antarctic Program](#)" includes information about the NSF reporting options and support resources. To ensure that the community has ready access to SAHPR-related resources, reminders are provided in regular communications with the community, and are in all public spaces of the stations and vessels.

16. Does NSF have procedures in place for when reports are filed against NSF employees within the USAP?

Yes, NSF has procedures in place for when EEO and non-EEO based reports are filed against NSF employees. In August 2022, NSF re-issued Staff Memorandum OD-22-14, *Policy Statement on Equal Opportunity and the Prevention of Harassment*. This policy provides two avenues for individuals to report harassment. EEO-based harassment should be reported to OECR. Non-EEO based harassment should be reported to the Workforce Relations Branch (WRB) in the Division of Human Resource Management (HRM). OECR and HRM have processes to resolve these reports.

a. Do these procedures and policies differ from those that are in place for contractors and subcontractors?

Contractors and subcontractors who wish to make a report against an NSF employee may use the reporting channels described in Question 16.

b. When reports of sexual assault or harassment are made against NSF employees, what is the investigations process?

If there is a report of alleged sexual assault against an NSF employee, the matter will immediately be referred to the Department of Justice for investigation and NSF informs the Office of Inspector General. If there is a report of sexual harassment against an NSF employee, the matter will be referred to NSF's EEO office (OECR) for additional coordination, including with NSF's Division of Human Resource Management, and appropriate investigation.

c. Does NSF conduct their own investigations of reports of incidents from the contractors or do they fully rely on the processes followed by the contractors?

NSF is responsible for processing and investigation of incidents that are reported against NSF employees. For incidents against non-NSF employees, whether there is a report from a contractor or against a contractor, NSF will determine the

responsible party for follow-up and monitor the progress of any potential investigations.

- d. Does NSF have authority over the investigative processes that are conducted by the contractors and subcontractors? Does NSF provide standards, guidelines, or procedures for contractors and subcontractors to follow when they conduct investigations of reports of sexual harassment or assault within the USAP?**

NSF does not have this authority and does not provide guidance to contractors on their internal investigations.

- 17. In what circumstances does NSF refer reports of sexual harassment, assault, stalking, or other issues to the Department of Labor, law enforcement, Department of Justice, or any other third-party government entity?**

At present, the NSF SAHPR Office does not directly refer civil sexual harassment matters to other federal entities. The NSF SAHPR Office can provide information to individuals about how to contact the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and/or the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), when appropriate. For limited criminal matters, the NSF Station Manager at McMurdo Station is a Special Deputy U.S. Marshal (SDUSM). On these matters, this individual acts under the direction of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and refers any reports received to them. For the 2023-24 season, the NSF Office of Inspector General has newly asserted its investigative authority for criminal matters in Antarctica and may also refer matters to the Department of Justice.

- 18. Has NSF conducted any further climate studies since the sending of this letter?**

A USAP Climate Survey has been developed and NSF has been actively engaged with OMB to receive approval to deploy the survey. We have provided responses to OMB statistical inquiries and provided a revised survey. Since the release of the SAHPR report, NSF has conducted a series of in-person and virtual listening sessions with the USAP community. These listening sessions have allowed NSF to continue to monitor the conditions on the ground and take actions that are responsive to community needs.

- a. If so, please provide the surveys and their results.**

Not currently applicable.

- b. Does NSF intend to continue to conduct climate surveys? If so, how often?**

Yes, annually.

c. How does NSF plan to utilize climate surveys and other tools to measure and track the climate within the USAP?

The USAP Climate Survey on sexual harassment will serve as a baseline for measuring improved experience in the USAP over time. The initial round of this survey will be initiated as soon NSF receives clearance from OMB to begin survey administration.

d. Will former USAP participants be allowed to participate in the climate surveys? Please provide a list of the populations who will be offered the opportunity to participate.

All personnel that have deployed within the four years prior to the survey release will be invited to participate. This includes federal staff, researchers and their teams, and contractors and subcontractors.

19. Since the publication of the SAHPR report, what interviews, listening sessions, and meetings has NSF had with stakeholders including Leidos, subcontractors, and current and former USAP participants in order to address the failings identified in the report and improve SAHPR-related policies and procedures?

Formal Listening Sessions with USAP

Between December 2022 and February 2023, NSF held 7 in-person listening sessions at McMurdo and a series of 6 virtual listening sessions open to all current and former USAP community members. Special sessions were reserved for Palmer and ship deployers, South Pole deployers, survivors of sexual assault in the USAP program, and early-career individuals. Participation for the in-person sessions ranged from 20-30 individuals per session, for an approximate total of 160 USAP participants. Some 74 USAP community members participated in the virtual sessions. In addition to the listening sessions, staff from the SAHPR program office communicated with and observed the working and living conditions of USAP community members at all levels.

A summary of actions that NSF took or plans to take in response to the listening sessions was presented to the National Science Board on November 29, 2023. This presentation is attached as a reference for Q19, in the folder labeled Q9 to Q37. It includes a list of all major themes we heard from the listening sessions, actions NSF has taken, and expected actions in the future.

Ongoing Engagement with USAP

In January 2023, NSF Leadership and NSB held two virtual town halls with the USAP community (one in McMurdo, and one in South Pole). These town halls were open to all community members, and the topics were: SAHPR and Improving the Research Environment in Antarctica, and Access to Antarctica for Scientific Research. In December 2023, a similar town hall was conducted in person with a small group of NSF and NSB leaders to discuss two topics: Supporting Antarctic Operations and Facilities Improvements for Research and Building a Stronger Antarctic Community. Additionally, Board members held two office hours to engage with the community in McMurdo.

Between October-November 2023, four NSF SAHPR staff members traveled to McMurdo and Palmer stations to engage with USAP participants, provide information on NSF reporting, and obtain feedback. The engagement included:

- 12 Office Hours at McMurdo
- A community postcard writing event to allow USAP participants to meet and get to know staff from NSF's SAHPR office.
- An OIG-NSF SAHPR-Victim Advocate joint presentation at McMurdo
- 3 joint OIG-NSF SAHPR briefings at McMurdo
- Meetings with stakeholders at McMurdo Station.
- A SAHPR staff member and the victim advocate jointly presented to the full Palmer community. (This occurred during Winter and Station Open; Science Open participants did not arrive until later in the season.)
- While on ice at McMurdo and Palmer Stations, SAHPR staff members met with key stakeholders and work centers to provide more information about the SAHPR Office and obtain feedback. These stakeholders included community members, Victim Advocate, Licensed Clinical Counselor, station leadership, McMurdo Station Medical Clinic staff, Assistant Chief of McMurdo Fire Department, McMurdo Broadcast Engineer, grantees, and contractors.
- While on ice at both McMurdo and Palmer Stations, SAHPR staff members volunteered to work alongside USAP community members in various work centers and capacities (such as the store and galley, or organizing the supply donation bins at the stations, stocking shelves, and laundering linens) to engage directly with participants and observe the day-to-day realities of the USAP working environment.

Broader engagements with the academic community

In August 2023, OECR/SAHPR representatives travelled to Alaska to engage with the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) and visited the Toolik Research Field Station. Representatives met with UAF staff, faculty, and students, both on campus and in the field, to discuss their experiences and recommendations for enhancing safety and inclusivity of field research.

a. The Committee is not requesting the names of any former USAP participants or any non-leadership-level current USAP participants but requests a description of the stakeholder groups consulted.

- The 2022-2023 listening sessions were open to all current and former USAP community members (federal staff, researchers and their teams, contractors, and subcontractors). Special sessions were reserved for deployers to Palmer and ships, deployers to South Pole, survivors of sexual assault in the USAP program, and early-career individuals.
- During the 2023 visits by SAHPR staff to McMurdo and Palmer Stations, all members of the USAP community were invited to SAHPR office hours. SAHPR staff met with key stakeholders and work centers to provide more information about the SAHPR Office and obtain feedback. These stakeholders included community members, Victim Advocate, Licensed Clinical Counselor, station leadership, McMurdo Station Medical Clinic staff, Assistant Chief of McMurdo Fire Department, McMurdo Broadcast Engineer, grantees, and contractors.
- The SAHPR Office conducted SAHPR benchmarking sessions with various federal partners (e.g., Air Force, Navy, Peace Corps, CDC, DOE, NASA, NOAA, USAID) with similarly challenging environments such as ships and submarines, field camps, remote locations, and across international borders to gather information and promising practices for supporting safe field research.
- NSF has also engaged with various international stakeholders to better understand current practices and focus areas among international research funding institutions to prevent and respond to harassment. At the 2023 Arctic Science Summit Week, NSF hosted a community session on fostering safe and inclusive field environments and met with the Forum of Arctic Research Operators (FARO) to discuss their experiences and recommendations regarding the same. NSF also presented and participated in the 13th Gender Summit and EU Gender Action Plus, hosted a Swedish delegation focused on safer environments in the innovation space, and engages regularly with UK Research and Innovation on the topic of harassment prevention.

b. Does NSF Plan to continue to hold the listening sessions with or without management?

Yes, it is our intention to continue to use both informal and formal opportunities to engage with the community.

Contracting Authority/ Transparency

20. How does NSF communicate the changes in procedures and policies to the prime contractor?

Changes in procedures, policies, contractual requirements, or contractual terms and conditions are communicated through contract modifications, which are issued by the Contracting Officer.

a. Does NSF facilitate or require the communication of these changes in procedures and policies from the prime contractor to the subcontractors?

Under the terms and conditions of the contract, contractual requirements placed on the prime contractor flow down to subcontractors.

b. Are there mechanisms in place for when the subcontractors or the prime contractor fail to meet and follow these requirements?

Yes, mechanisms are available to address incidents where contractual performance is not satisfactory. Letters of concern, show cause notices, cure notices, award fee determinations, partial terminations, and annual performance assessments are all available to capture or represent unsatisfactory performance. Any performance concerns can be raised in weekly meetings between the contractor and the NSF contracting office (standing meetings exist pertaining to the overall contract as well as specific projects) and recurring monthly meetings that exist for the purposes of contract activities which trend above or below satisfactory thresholds.

As an example, on August 11, 2022, NSF, requested that Leidos provide NSF with a plan describing specific steps Leidos will take to ensure all subcontractors establish, maintain, and comply with the appropriate processes and policies related to the prevention of and response to incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault, as well as violations of the Polar Code of Conduct. NSF also requested information on how Leidos will routinely conduct oversight of subcontractors to ensure their established policies and processes are effective.

On August 31, 2022, Leidos responded with specific actions it was taking with its subcontractors (i.e., bi-weekly SAHPR meetings and a bi-weekly HR consortium) to provide oversight and ensure compliance and consistency. It also agreed to review all subcontracts to ensure the inclusion of all contractual terms as well as reviewing their subcontractors' policy and procedures.

This resulted in the issuance of Contract Modification 136, which formally captured the commitments and affirmations arising out of the responses to the 12 July letter

of concern, and a subsequent letter affirms that these requirements flow down to subcontractors. This modification also revised Deliverable 008, "Incident Reporting", to clarify that the definition of "significant events" includes sexual assault and harassment and included a new deliverable (049) for a Quarterly Sexual Assault and Harassment Report.

A complete list of SAHPR-related letters and contract modifications can be found in the folder for Question 8.

21. To what extent does NSF have the authority to require contractors and subcontractors to abide by procedures and policies for the handling and investigation of reports?

The ASC includes FAR Clause 52.203-13, which requires cooperation with the Office of Inspector General. Further, the contract contains language pertaining to compliance with investigations: "Contractor Cooperation - The Contractor (and subcontractors) shall fully cooperate with all audits, inspections, investigations, or other reviews conducted by or on behalf of the Contracting Officer or the Chief Information Security Officer or the USAP Authorizing Official. Full cooperation includes, but is not limited to, prompt disclosure to authorized requestors of information sufficient to identify the nature and extent of any computer security incident, including a breach of sensitive information or personally identifiable information and the individuals responsible for such activity. The Contractor's (and any subcontractors') cooperation with audits, inspections, investigations, and reviews conducted under this clause will be provided at no additional cost to the Government." These contract provisions do not give NSF the ability to direct the human resources (HR) policies and procedures of contractors and subcontractors; they are meant to ensure cooperation with federal investigations.

22. What are the current background check requirements and processes of approval that NSF employs?

All Federal employees deploying to Antarctica must meet the requirements for federal employment, based on the risk designation of their position. Table 1 below describes the background check requirements for contractor employees, based on type of position. Currently, NSF requires at least an OF-306 and fingerprint submission prior to deployment for contract employees. If any derogatory information is revealed during the vetting process, that information must be mitigated prior to being permitted to deploy.

Table 1: Vetting Approach for Contractor Employees

Contract Designation	Information	Vetting Approach
Elevated Risk Positions – Full-time or temporary contractors whose position meets the OPM ¹ criteria as <i>Tier 2 or higher</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form 1690² • OF-306³ • Fingerprints • SF-85P⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full investigation at OPM-designated Tier • Interim favorable determination prior to on-boarding • Terminated and recalled from Antarctica if later determined to be unfavorable • Reinvestigated every five years • New investigation required when there is a two-year break in Federal service
Non-Elevated Risk Positions – Full-time or temporary contractors > six months whose position meets the OPM criteria as <i>Tier 1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form 1690 • OF-306 • Fingerprints • SF-85P 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full investigation at OPM-designated Tier • Interim favorable determination prior to on-boarding • Terminated and recalled from Antarctica if later determined to be unfavorable • New investigation required when there is a two-year break in Federal service
Seasonal – Contractors in non-elevated risk positions expected to work on the contract for < six months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form 1690 • OF-306 • Fingerprints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All temporary contractors < six months on the contract (employer agreement may be longer) • Interim favorable determination prior to on-boarding • Terminated and recalled from Antarctica if later determined to be unfavorable • Seasonal contractors who return for a second consecutive season receive full investigation at OPM-designated Tier
Extended ⁵ – Seasonal contractors who extend beyond the originally intended six-month timeframe due to unforeseen circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fingerprints • SF-85P 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full investigation initiated as soon as extension is foreseen • Fingerprints held by the contractor <i>prior to</i> deployment • On-ice internet access prioritized for timely e-QIP submittal • Terminated and recalled from Antarctica if later determined to be unfavorable • New investigation required when there is a > two-year break in Federal service

¹ OPM's Position Designation System determines the level of investigation based on duties and responsibilities of a position.

² Includes legal name, contract period of performance, and federal sponsor.

³ Includes information about military service, employment, prior convictions, and federal debt delinquencies.

⁴ Includes citizenship, residences, education, employment, references, relatives, travel, police record, finances, drug use.

⁵ Off-boarding dates delayed due to variations in inter-continental flights are not considered Extended for vetting purposes.

a. How are these requirements communicated to applicants to the USAP?

As a part of the contract terms, Leidos is required to enforce NSF's required vetting procedures for their applicants, and to ensure that the requirements flow down to their subcontractors. The formal vetting process begins when NSF's Personnel Security program sends onboarding emails to each contractor and subcontractor employee explaining the requirements and process.

b. How have these policies and procedures changed in the last 10 years?

All contractors working for NSF (in USAP or otherwise) are subject to the same requirements. In response to a FISMA audit in FY2020 and an OIG investigation of contractor vetting in FY2021, NSF revisited the procedures in place for the USAP to ensure that all contractors associated with the program went through a consistent federal adjudication process that complied with NSF requirements. Table 1 represents the current requirements.

c. Do the background check requirements differ between NSF employees and ASC workers in Antarctica?

The categories of contract employees whose background check requirements differ from full-time, U.S. based federal employees are described below.

Seasonal contractors

Seasonal contractors (less than six months deployment) in a position designated low risk are not required to undergo the full vetting process NSF has in place for all other staff. Seasonal contractors are required to submit an OF-306 and an FBI fingerprint check only prior to deployment. If a seasonal contractor is extended beyond six months or returns for a second season, they are then required to undergo the full vetting process (See Table 1 – Extended). Any contractor in a moderate risk or higher position is required to undergo a full process like that for federal employees which also includes the submission of an e-QIP. There are some exceptions in place due to lack of resources or priority/mission need.

Foreign Nationals

The USAP employs a small number of foreign nationals. Some may reside in the U.S., while others do not. Most of the foreign nationals are from New Zealand. Because of restrictions that limit overseas investigative coverage on arrest records, NSF only requests a completed OF-306 prior to deployment for these foreign nationals, except for those from New Zealand.

For New Zealand foreign nationals only, depending on the subject contractor's employer, NSF either receives an attestation from the subject that they do not have a

criminal conviction record or an official record from the New Zealand Ministry of Justice. If the subject does have a criminal record, the subject is required to provide NSF with that information for further adjudication.

U.S. citizens with no recent U.S. presence

Because of restrictions that limit overseas investigative coverage on arrest records, U.S. citizens who have no recent residency (> 3 years) in the U.S. are only required to complete an OF-306 prior to deployment.

d. Can NSF contractually require Leidos to include these standards for employment in their hiring processes?

Yes, NSF may set the standards that hired personnel must meet for employment with the contractor. The current standards are outlined in Table 1 and are in place in the Leidos contract.

e. If so, why has NSF failed to include these requirements in the previous contract with the prime contractor?

As written, the contract includes all standards currently required by NSF.

23. Is each subcontractor responsible for their own investigation into reports of sexual assault or harassment?

Subcontractors are subject to the same requirements of the FAR that are described in the response to Q21. Each subcontractor is responsible for complying with their policies and procedures and legal requirements related to roles and responsibilities on investigations. Any criminal activity should be reported to the appropriate law enforcement entity.

a. The Committee has heard allegations that prior to the SAHPR report, Leidos rarely communicated to NSF regarding these investigations outside of notification that someone was being removed from the USAP. Is this correct?

[RESPONSE]: Prior to the communication requirements that NSF has recently implemented in the program, unless NSF directed the removal of an employee, we were not formally provided with an explanation for an individual's departure from the contract, regardless of the reason. In some cases, this may have been disclosed during our regular contract oversight processes. As described in the response to Q11e, current procedures require more frequent communication with NSF on any reports, and regular meetings with NSF to follow up on actions the contractor may take with respect to a report, including the removal of contractor employees.

24. How is NSF supporting the increased role of the OIG this season, and how will the agency continue to support the OIG's work as a third-party investigator of sexual assault reports within the USAP?

In August 2023, the NSF Chief Operating Officer and the NSF Inspector General jointly chartered an Antarctic Law Enforcement Coordination Group which was specifically aimed at coordinating investigative and/or law-enforcement activities between NSF and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). That group is co-chaired by the Acting Office Director of the Office of Polar Programs (OPP) and the Assistant Inspector General for Investigations. Membership includes representatives of OPP, OIG, the Office of the General Counsel, the Office of Equity and Civil Rights, the Office of Budget, Finance, and Award Management. The recently appointed Special Assistant to the NSF Director for SAHPR Implementation has just been added to the group.

The group has focused on understanding the role of OIG relative to the roles of NSF organizations in the processing and investigation of reports that may or may not be of a criminal nature, and in clarifying communication paths for a variety of reporting channels to ensure: (1) that no reports go unaddressed because of a lack of clarity of responsibility, and (2) that privacy of all individuals involved is protected to the maximum extent that is consistent with robust investigations and the expectations of all individuals who are involved.

For the current season, NSF has supported the deployment of several members of the OIG team; briefed OIG on considerations related to operations in Antarctica; distributed information to the on-ice population on behalf of OIG; and arranged meetings, office space, and office hours in Antarctica for OIG staff who have deployed.

Through the Coordination Group, NSF continues to discuss and clarify the relative roles of the OIG and the Special Deputy U.S. Marshal (SDUSM); the SDUSM holds a law enforcement responsibility based on an agreement with the Department of Justice. We expect that the relative roles of OIG and the SDUSM may evolve in the coming year as OIG gains more experience with their ability to staff and conduct activities in Antarctica. See responses to Questions 27 and 28 below for more background about the SDUSM role.

25. The Committee has received various accounts of individuals who were alleged or found to be "in violation of the Polar Code of Conduct." Please provide clarification related to the following:

a. What standard of review is being applied in the determination of a violation of the Polar Code of Conduct?

The Polar Code of Conduct reemphasizes the principles and expectations for professional conduct and acceptable behavior by all individuals who work or visit a USAP or NSF-managed Arctic station, field camp, other facility, ship, or aircraft

(including the gateway cities that individuals travel to and from on their polar deployments). It includes researchers, students, contractors, official visitors, federal civilian and military personnel and others. All participating individuals must sign the Polar Code of Conduct.

Each employing organization has a plan for implementing the Code of Conduct (CoC) including reporting of violations, carrying out investigations, and administering consequences, depending on the type of violation. Any unethical behavior is a violation, not just harassment, bullying or sexual harassment. Violations are reported to the cognizant managing official at NSF. NSF reviews the CoC reports to understand the scope of issues presented and recommends policy changes or other actions.

b. Who determines violations of the Polar Code of Conduct?

The employing organization determines if the CoC was violated. Those violations are reported to NSF either in real time or when CoC violation information is requested (quarterly/annually).

c. What is the process for reporting an alleged violation of the Polar Code of Conduct?

Each employing organization has a CoC reporting process consistent with its internal processes for reporting incidents. There is an annual call for CoC violations. The Antarctic Support Contractor, Leidos, reports quarterly to NSF's Contracting Officer (CO) and Contracting Officer's Representative (COR). The Arctic contractor, Battelle Arctic Research Operations, reports in real time to the CO and COR for their contract.

d. What are the consequences for violation of the Polar Code of Conduct?

There are many behaviors that are violations of the CoC. Consequences depend on the type of organization and type of offense. They can include removal from the station or vessel, employer terminations, and other administrative, civil, or criminal enforcement actions. For the contracts, the CO and the COR have options for providing consequences to the performing organizations. For grants to research organizations, there are different mechanisms that may include engagement with NSF's Office of Equity and Civil Rights. NSF has an opportunity to review the individual incidents as well as the ensemble to consider policy changes or recommend consequences. Note, the Code of Conduct does not create its own enforcement authority, but instead, relies on existing enforcement pathways.

e. How is this communicated to the contractor and subcontractor employees?

Generally speaking, the employer organizations would already be aware of the enforcement action as they were the entity taking such actions against their employee. In situations where NSF directs removal from station, NSF communicates such action through appropriate contracting channels.

Contract and subcontract employees are made aware of the CoC and are made aware of it and are required to sign the document (as do all other participants in NSF's Antarctic and Arctic activities). There are CoC fliers about the CoC and information on reporting posted at work locations. Workplace training for every contracted or subcontracted individual covers the CoC.

26. What safeguards does NSF employ to prevent retaliation based on reporting history, an issue that was brought up in the SAHPR report?

To directly respond to community concerns, in December 2022, NSF developed and distributed an informational resource for USAP participants on unlawful retaliation. The resource can be found on NSF's public facing website at under Reporting Options for the USAP Community at <https://new.nsf.gov/stopping-harassment/sahpr>. Instances of retaliation can be reported to the SAHPR Office at saferscience@nsf.gov.

a. Does NSF have visibility into contractor and subcontractor seasonal hiring? How much oversight does NSF have and exercise over the hiring and firing practices of Leidos and its subcontractors?

NSF provides the contract requirements for employee deployment to be fulfilled each season; NSF also provides the standards personnel must adhere to. The contractor proposes the labor mix to achieve NSF's requirements with personnel meeting the standards. Beyond five specific "Key Personnel", positions NSF does not review individual resumes, nor is it involved in the hiring action of any individuals. In the case of key personnel, NSF reviews the resume of the single individual proposed by the contractor to fill a position before providing concurrence. Any possible increased involvement in hiring actions by NSF would need to be measured against the appearance NSF was creating a personal services contract (which is highly restricted in the FAR).

b. Does NSF allow for contractors and subcontractors to consider the reporting history of individuals when considering contract renewals?

Yes. As described in the response to Question 9a, contractors and subcontractors are required to conduct a pre-screening process to probe for prior history of sexual

harassment and assault. The subsequent NSF-conducted vetting process asks about past employment history for adverse departures from a job.

The ASC also includes the following clause: Clause H.2, REPLACEMENT OF PERSONNEL – CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL CONDUCT has the following language considering individuals with prior reports related to sexual assault and harassment: Any contractor employee(s), including subcontractor employee(s), removed from the Antarctic for sexual assault or sexual harassment shall be prohibited from deployment to Antarctica for a period of three (3) years from the date of their removal.

c. Are considerations and criteria used in re-hiring individuals who have already been deployed different from the criteria considered for new employees?

NSF's requirements for contractor vetting are the same whether the individuals have been deployed in prior seasons or are first time deployers. Aside from the contract requirements, hiring decisions are the purview of the contractor, and their considerations and criteria related to re-hire of individuals who have deployed prior is not known to NSF. NSF's vetting procedures allow multiple mechanisms to ensure that individuals who have previously been removed from USAP will be subject to ASC contract requirements, including the 3-year deployment pause described in the previous question.

d. Has NSF considered implementing revisions to the hiring processes utilized by the prime contractor and subcontractors?

Consistent with NSF's desire to avoid creation of a de-facto personal services contract, NSF has not requested revisions to the hiring processes of contractors and subcontractors, beyond the fact that hires must adhere to the requirements of the contract (e.g., following NSF's requirements for contractor vetting, identifying if an individual has been removed from the ice for prior misconduct – see responses to Question 26b).

NSF Station Manager/ Fire Department

27. It is our understanding that the USAP has a Station Manager based out of the McMurdo facility who is an NSF employee. This individual doubles as a Special Deputy Marshal and operates as the sole law enforcement presence on the Ice during both seasons. What are the responsibilities of this individual as NSF Station Manager and then as Special Deputy Marshal? What responsibilities does the NSF Station Manager have in the process of receiving and investigating reports of sexual assault or harassment?

The roles and responsibilities of the NSF Station Manager are described in the Position Description (attached as a document referencing Question 27 in the folder for Q9 to A37). For criminal matters (e.g., sexual assault) the NSF Station Manager acts under the direction of the DOJ and would take any reports to them. For issues of harassment, and as is true for all NSF staff, they would file a report to the SAHPR Office at NSF.

28. What training is required of the NSF Station Manager? Please identify any required training that relates to the Station Manager's responsibilities in SAHPR-related and criminal matters.

Prior to deputization, the NSF Station Managers are required to complete the Criminal Investigator Training Program at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. This multi-month course is the basic training for federal law enforcement. Additionally, in 2023, the NSF Station Managers participated in training on trauma-informed interview techniques. The specific training session they participated in was Comprehensive Victim Interviewing (CVI): Helping Victims Retrieve and Disclose Traumatic Memories. This training, or similar, will be mandatory going forward.

a. Is this individual instructed by the Marshal Services on policies and procedures to address criminal issues within the USAP?

Yes, please see the response above.

b. Who does this individual directly report to at the U.S. Marshal Service?

For their role as SDUSM, they currently report to the United States Marshal (A), District of Hawaii. The current individual in this role is William Jessup (William.Jessup@usdoj.gov).

29. Can you please distinguish the responsibilities of the ASC Station Manager from the NSF Station Manager?

The NSF Station Manager is a federal employee responsible for government oversight of the USAP operations (covering the work of the prime contractor, grantee participants, military partners, etc.) and a Special Deputy U.S. Marshal.

The ASC Area Manager is a contract employee (Leidos) who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of station activities as executed by the prime contractor (e.g., operating equipment, running the galley, supporting science requirements).

30. In briefings, NSF has told the Committee that the Antarctic Fire Department serves as the first responder in cases of sexual assault reported to the emergency dispatcher.

What measures is NSF taking to ensure that these individuals are trained in the SAHPR-related responsibilities they have?

As described in the response to Question 28, the NSF Station Manager receives both law enforcement and SAHPR-related training. In McMurdo (where the Antarctic Fire Department is located) 911 is a resource that can be used by anyone on station to call for help in any emergency. This call routes to the Central Communications dispatch to be redirected based on the nature of the emergency.

In cases where an ambulance may be needed, the dispatcher would call the fire department ambulance at the same time the NSF Station Manager/SDUSM and medical office would be made aware of the situation. If an ambulance is not needed, the NSF Station Manager or ASC Area Manager would be notified to respond. The NSF Station Manager is now required to be trained in trauma-informed victim interviewing techniques.

Additionally, based on professional feedback from DOJ and other law enforcement professionals, there has been concern about the NSF Station Manager/SDUSM responding alone to any callouts. At this time, if the SDUSM is called to the scene of a concern they are required to ensure that they are not alone and as the Fire Department is on call 24x7 they may be asked to join the SDUSM to the scene but have no specific role in a response otherwise.

National Science Board Meeting**31. What procedural changes are being made or considered on preventative measures other than the pre-deployment training?**

NSF is taking a coordinated approach to addressing and preventing sexual assault and harassment in the USAP. NSF's SAHPR Office is working to cultivate an organizational climate of mutual trust and respect that is victim centered and trauma informed. In addition to training, other measures NSF has taken (and described earlier) include:

- Sending members of the NSF SAHPR team to Antarctica to connect with USAP participants and establish trust within the community
- Raise awareness of the SAHPR Office mission to help all those deployed to Antarctica to better understand the role of the NSF SAHPR Office
- Developing tailored SAHPR communications and strategic messaging
- Raising awareness of SAHPR support resources and simplifying them
- Improving response procedures and building transparency on follow-up actions

- Identifying enhancements and expansions to prevention training and victim-centered services.
- Enhancing physical security
- Conducting expanded pre-screening for deployers.
- Formulating recommendations for SAHPR program improvements to drive USAP culture change.

Prior to the beginning of this summer season, the SAHPR Office met with ASC and other Federal USAP Partners to ensure familiarity with NSF's oversight of SAHPR reports (to include retaliation) and set the tone for the coming season.

32. Has NSF considered other avenues or consulted with the OIG on efforts that could be implemented to prevent these incidents from occurring? What methods of outreach is NSF pursuing to increase the workforce?

NSF is working closely with OIG on addressing sexual harassment and assault (as described in the response to Question 24). This summer season, the NSF SAHPR Office and NSF OIG had in person, joint presence on the ice and provided collaborative presentations to the USAP community about SAHPR reporting and investigating (to include reports of retaliation). Staff from NSF OIG and OECR also jointly attended a training on Trauma Informed Investigative Techniques.

The Antarctic Support Contractor uses a variety of methods for employee recruitment. They partner with trade and culinary schools, engage on trade-specific job boards and other social media venues, and use specialized sourcing teams when needed to target specific positions that are difficult to fill. A key part of the future ASC procurement will include assessment of recruitment and retention strategies.

33. At the NSB meeting, NSF mentioned that there were ongoing discussions with other institutions about the findings drawn from the climate surveys and what they have found to be effective changes. What are these changes and how are they being implemented?

NSF has investments in major research infrastructure across our portfolio (<https://new.nsf.gov/focus-areas/infrastructure>). NSF's Chief Officer for Research Facilities (CORF) canvassed all of NSF's major research infrastructure organizations to determine if they had conducted recent climate or culture surveys; they all responded affirmatively.

As a result of these surveys (which were conducted independently of NSF), a wide range of actions have been taken across the portfolio. Examples include:

- One organization engaged a third-party firm to evaluate the results of its culture survey and to develop training to address the needs identified.

- One institution created a Workforce Climate Committee that reports to the institution's president and comprises the general counsel, Chief Diversity Officer, Title IX administrator and several members of the staff. The committee has advised on training, gender equity concerns, and the development of additional surveys.
- At several facilities, results from culture/climate surveys have led to new training and resources for supervisors, Codes of Conduct, and facility-wide bystander training.
- A prominent, and publicly available, result of a past culture survey was the development of a video series on Civility at Sea, which is required of any person deploying on a ship of the U.S. Academic Research Fleet (<https://www.unols.org/news/rvoc-updates/now-available-fostering-respectful-work-environment-module-ii>).

NSF is also aware of initiatives being taken in the academic sector. For example, the University of New Hampshire has a Prevention Innovations Research Center (PIRC) whose goal is to improve institutional policy, practice and capacity for sexual and relationship violence and stalking prevention and response through research and evaluation. NSF's Office of Equity and Civil Rights and Directorate for Geosciences have engaged in discussions with PIRC on evidence-based practices to improve research environments, whether in the laboratory or in field research.

34. At the NSB meeting, NSF informed the Board that the USAP alcohol policies are changing as part of the overall policy updates in response to the SAHPR report. Please provide the updated policies and the reasoning and evidence for why these changes were made and the expected changes that these policy updates are expected to facilitate.

Updates to the USAP alcohol policy were made to increase alcohol-free spaces on station, to highlight and expand alcohol-free recreation opportunities for USAP participants, and to reduce overall alcohol availability in response to annual issues of vandalism, physical altercations, and inappropriate behavior in a communal living environment. These changes are morale initiatives, and as we shared at the NSB meeting, are not a part of the formal SAHPR response. They are part of our ongoing efforts to improve the climate and culture in the USAP, in direct response to feedback from the community.

The USAP Alcohol policy and implementing procedures are provided as references to Question 34 in the folder labeled Q9 to Q37.

a. Can NSF explain how the removal of a third party (bartender) is helpful in preventing over-intoxication?

NSF would like to clarify that the position was not removed – the title was modified from 'bartender' to 'club attendant.' When the clubs are open, they are staffed by a club attendant who must be "Training for Intervention Procedures (TIPS)" (or their state equivalent) certified. This was the same requirement for bartenders previously.

Club attendants are responsible for the physical space and for reporting any concerns of the participants using the space.

- b. Are there concerns that removing the social, regulated spaces allowing alcohol consumption and moving all sanctioned alcohol consumption to the dorms will have negative impacts, such as increased isolation, overconsumption, or alcoholism?**

NSF would like to clarify that all social, regulated spaces allowing alcohol have not been removed. There are three social areas (or clubs) that allow alcohol. In two of the clubs, attendees are still able to bring alcoholic drinks (purchased from the store as part of their ration) into the space for consumption. The policy change that was made ceased the past practice of additional alcohol (above the ration) being available for sale in the clubs. The amount of the ration was not changed. Additionally, one of the clubs was turned into a 24x7 alcohol free zone, based on community feedback. Responsible alcohol consumption is also allowed in the galley during mealtimes when employees are off duty.

- c. If NSF considers alcohol consumption to be a contributing factor to sexual assault and harassment, is there concern that limiting sanctioned alcohol witnesses of poor behavior?**

The USAP SAHPR report found, and NSF concurs, that alcohol sometimes contributed to sexual misconduct but was not a primary cause (see Finding #7 of the SAHPR report). The NSF is committed to promoting an environment in which all members of the USAP community are valued, respected, and safe. We would like to clarify that alcohol consumption is not limited to dorm rooms - please see the response to Question 34b on the variety of spaces available for responsible consumption.

- 35. How has NSF increased the visibility of SAHPR-related resources since the publication of the report via the USAP webpage? Will NSF continue to increase the visibility of these resources, including on publicly accessible and frequently viewed web pages?**

NSF is taking proactive efforts to publicize the availability of the on-ice resources through USAP publications, information materials posted throughout NSF's three stations, and through digital communication channels. The community also receives regular status updates on the resources (e.g., notices when the Victim Advocate may visit other locations). Additionally, since the publication of the report, NSF has completed numerous communication campaigns for SAHPR-related resources.

For example, in April 2023, the agency launched the [NSF Antarctic Helpline](#) and promoted this new launch with an [NSF News](#) announcement, printed marketing materials, digital

signage throughout USAP stations and the research vessels, agency newsletter articles, social media posts, and email messages. After the initial launch, communications about the helpline were added to general messages about USAP support resources and have been highlighted in both printed and digital marketing materials this summer season.

NSF also updated the [Stopping Harassment and Assault webpage](#) with reporting information for USAP participants and developed a new subpage for the agency's [Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention and Response in the U.S. Antarctic Program](#). This new subpage includes NSF's reporting options for all USAP participants, the support resources for both current and former USAP participants, and [information regarding retaliation and reprisal](#). The pages are publicly available on the agency's website, www.nsf.gov, and have been promoted through a variety of communications channels to the USAP community. Some of these channels include USAP-wide emails, USAP webpage updates, agency newsletter articles, NSF Antarctic Helpline webpage updates, and various printed materials (such as flyers, notecards, business cards, etc.).

NSF will continue to publicize SAHPR-related resources through the agency's public webpages and other communications channels. There will be ongoing communication campaigns for promoting USAP support resources and NSF reporting options each summer and winter season in Antarctica.

36. The Committee is concerned that there are insufficient mental health resources available to those in need while in such a harsh environment. What authority does NSF have to include counselors, psychiatrists, or mental health professionals as part of the on-ice medical team?

A mental health professional is included as part of the on-ice medical team, as well as via telemedicine capabilities. NSF will continue to assess whether additional resources are needed to appropriately support the community as we expand and improve our SAHPR program.

a. Can NSF require that all SAHPR employees on the ice and LDSS staffers be trained in some form of professional counseling in order to serve as a mental health resource in the USAP?

Current SAHPR employees and LDSS staffers who provide direct services to USAP deployers include the Victim Advocate, the counselor, station medical personnel and the NSF Station Manager. The counselor and some members of the medical personnel do have training in professional counseling. The individuals who staff the NSF Antarctic Helpline provide immediate crisis intervention, support, and referrals to counseling as requested. NSF will be developing a long-term SAHPR strategy to address gaps in existing services.

37. NSF provided the details of the infrastructure plans for the Antarctic Program in response to the personal safety concerns raised in the SAHPR Report. What is the current status of those projects, specifically the new lodging building?

Construction of the new lodging building is ongoing. It is expected to be available for full use by USAP deployers during the 2026-2027 research season. In addition, NSF had heard from the community, prior to the release of the SAHPR report, that there were some immediate steps the agency could take to enhance personal safety. This included installation of door viewers in every lodging room, improved key management and controls for master keys, and additional satellite communications and protocols for deep field teams. All these enhancements have been completed; they should be considered early safety measures that contribute to supporting a healthy, safe environment. The overall modernization program is largely implemented through the Antarctic Infrastructure Recapitalization program and NSF will always prioritize all our facility updates to ensure safe working environments.

a. There have been concerns raised regarding the location of the SAHPR advocate office. In the infrastructure plans, does NSF plan to address this concern raised by employees within the USAP?

The Victim Advocate has considered other locations available currently on station and deemed that the current site is the best available balance of accessibility and privacy. Future facility designs will consider the unique needs of all station support functions, including for sexual assault and harassment. If there are more specific concerns that have come to the attention of the committee, NSF would appreciate the opportunity to respond.