

## Report in Brief

Date: February 2022

Report No. A-03-20-03001

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
**OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**



### Why OIG Did This Audit

The Department of Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act, 2019, and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2019, P.L. No. 115-245, directed OIG to examine the efforts of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to ensure the integrity of its grant application evaluation and recipient selection processes. This audit is part of OIG's response to this directive.

Our objective was to review the National Cancer Institute's (NCI's) post-award process for providing oversight and monitoring of grants.

### How OIG Did This Audit

We obtained a list of all 7,564 extramural grant awards, totaling \$3.8 billion, that NCI made in fiscal year (FY) 2019. We also obtained a listing of 1,678 extramural grant awards, totaling \$2.2 billion, that NCI closed in FY 2019. We interviewed NIH and NCI officials familiar with the grant award process and obtained and reviewed NCI's policies and procedures covering its grant post-award process.

To review the grant post-award process for different types of recipients and awards, we selected a judgmental sample of 17 grants awarded in FY 2019 totaling \$79 million and 20 grants closed in FY 2019 that had awards totaling \$70.6 million.

## The National Institutes of Health Could Improve Its Post-Award Process for the Oversight and Monitoring of Grant Awards

### What OIG Found

NCI's post-award process for providing oversight and monitoring of grants was generally effective in ensuring that grantees met the program objectives and that NCI was able to identify potential problems. However, for 12 of the 20 grants in our sample that were closed in FY 2019, the grantee did not submit final reports within 120 days of the end of the period of performance as required.

NIH's Division of Grants System Integration (DGS/Closeout Center) provides outreach on NCI's behalf to grantees with respect to the due dates of the final reports within 10 days of the end of the period of performance but does not provide another reminder until after the final reports are late. This delays the closeout process. A recipient may draw funds up to the date that its Final Federal Financial Report is due to NIH or up to 120 days past the period of performance end date.

If grantees submit final reports late, it could indicate an issue with the grantee's ability to comply with grant requirements, including accounting for grant funds and tracking the progress and outcomes of the grant.

### What OIG Recommends and NIH Comments

We recommend that NCI coordinate with NIH's DGS/Closeout Center to update policies and procedures for monitoring grantees' submission of closeout documents to include more periodic outreach to grantees before the final reports become delinquent.

In written comments on our draft report, NIH agreed with our recommendation and described the corrective action it plans to take. Specifically, NIH stated that it is planning to add an additional notification on day 90, before the submission deadline of 120 days, to address our recommendation regarding increased outreach efforts to grantees. NIH plans to update its policies and procedures by the end of FY 2022 in response to our recommendation.