

**Data Requested Submitted By The OIG During The Entrance Interview**  
**On February 8, 2018**

**Question No. 1: Were any other grants to NAS halted in a similar manner.**

**Response No. 1:**

No. OSMRE did not halt any other grants or cooperative agreements that were issued to NAS in a similar manner.

**Question No. 2: Were there any other grants to any organization halted by OSMRE that exceeded \$100,000?**

**Response No. 2:**

No. OSMRE has not halted any grants or cooperative agreements to any other organization that exceeded \$100,000.

**Question No. 3: Were there any concerns that NAS was not performing adequately on the Cooperative Agreement?**

**Response No. 3:**

No. OSMRE had no concerns that NAS was not performing adequately as per the Cooperative Agreement.

NAS provided quarterly updates (i.e. program narratives and financial reports) with OSMRE's technical representative that detailed their work efforts for the given time period. In addition, OSMRE's technical representatives were in communication with NAS on various aspects of the study. The efforts by NAS were found to be reasonable for each quarter as documented in the progress reports.

**Question No. 4: Were there any concerns that NAS was not spending the grant money as the Cooperative Agreement stipulated?**

**Response No. 4:**

No. OSMRE had no concerns that NAS was not spending the monies as stipulated under the Cooperative Agreement appropriately.

This project was established as a Cooperative Agreement which meant there was substantial OSMRE involvement. In addition, OSMRE had placed this Cooperative Agreement under an "Agency Review" at the time of award to facilitate the Bureau's review and approval of each NAS draw down request.

Initially there were a few issues. Specifically the first two draw down requests submitted by NAS were determined to be too generic. Thus OSMRE's project technical representative requested more details to support NAS' draw down requests. Subsequently, NAS provided more detailed

explanation for each draw down request. In another instance the total draw down request did not equal the sum of NAS' breakdown of expenses. The OSMRE project technical representative notified NAS of the error and NAS resubmitted their request. Besides these minor administrative issues, NAS was spending the money as stipulated in the Cooperative Agreement.

**Question No. 5: How was the communication sent to NAS to cease activities of the funding, and from who?**

**Response No. 5**

On August 18, 2017, OSMRE's Acting Director accompanied by a DOI Solicitor telephoned Dr. Elizabeth Eide the NAS Technical/Program Officer to notify her of the Department of Interior's decision to halt activities under the Cooperative Agreement. On August 18, 2017, the OSMRE Acting Director also issued a formal two-page letter to NAS personnel (Ms. Eide, Dr. Gregory Symmes, and Mr. Douglas Denning) via e-mail and regular U.S. mail.

**Data Request Submitted By The OIG Via Email On February 15, 2018**

**Question No. 1: Listing of other OSMRE grants in excess of \$100,000 halted in a similar manner.**

**Response No. 1:**

OSMRE does not have a list of grants or cooperative agreements in excess of \$100,000 that were halted in a similar manner as the NAS Cooperative Agreement - S16AC20034 because none of OSMRE's other financial assistance awards have been halted to date.

**Question No. 2: Information showing the grant expired and that the funds were returned to Treasury.**

**Response No. 2:**

The Cooperative Agreement is on hold, but has NOT been terminated and closed out. The funds will remain obligated against the agreement until it is either completed or terminated.

The agreement was funded with OSMRE's two-year (15/16) fiscal year (FY) 2015 Regulation and Technology appropriation, which was available for obligation until September 30, 2016. That appropriation is now considered "expired."

In accordance with appropriations law, funds in expired accounts remain available for expenditure for five years after the account expires. Funds that were not obligated before the account expires, and funds deobligated after the period of availability, cannot be used to address any new requirement. Those funds are only available for adjustments to valid obligations that were made during the period of availability.

All funds that remain unexpended from the FY 2015 Regulation and Technology appropriation (to include any funds from the subject cooperative agreement) will be returned to U.S. Treasury when the account becomes "closed" on September 30, 2021.

**Question No. 3. Contact information for whom made the decision above OSMRE to halt the grant funding.**

**Response No. 3:**

OSMRE – Program Support Directorate staff has no direct knowledge as to exactly who made the decision above OSMRE to halt funding for the Cooperative Agreement. However, we have provided the three (3) emails communications in which various DOI personnel expressed an interest in halting the funding for the NAS Cooperative Agreement.

*See Attachment 1*

- July 12, 2017, @2.30pm email entitled, Re: *Our Cooperative Agreement with the National Academy of Sciences (S16AC20034)*

OSMRE's Program Support Directorate staff documented the initial inquiry from a DOI's Solicitor EX5 (DPP)(ACP)  
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- August 9, 2017, @5.23pm email entitled, *Fwd: Grants and Cooperative Agreements*.
- August 18, 2017, @3.03pm email entitled, *Halt Letter to NAS*.

**Question No. 4. Justification provided to OSMRE to halt the agreement.**

**Response No. 4:**

The justification provided to OSMRE to halt the NAS Cooperative Agreement are outlined in the following communications: - See Attachment 2

*See Attachment 2*

- i) See email dated July 12, 2017, (@ 2.30pm entitled, Re: Our Cooperative Agreement with the National Academy of Sciences (S16AC20034)
- ii) DOI's email dated August 9, 2017, @ 5.23 pm prepared by Landon "Tucker" Davis entitled, *Fwd: Grants and Cooperative Agreements* .
  - This email communication allude to a "department -wide freeze or hold on all activity involving grants and cooperative agreements over \$100,000..." and, "OSMRE is facing budgetary strains and we are trying to find ways to best steward our limited resources and comply with pre-existing secretarial orders\*. Importantly DOI issued a hold order on this grant months ago..."
- iii) OSMRE's Letter dated August 18, 2017, and email dated August 18, 2017 @5.42pm to Dr. Elizabeth A. Eide.
  - The formal letter issued to NAS that was drafted by DOI's Solicitor for the OSMRE's Acting Director's signature explained that the " Department of Interior has begun an Agency review of its grants and cooperative agreements in excess of \$100,00, largely as a result of our changing budget situation"

\*See Attachment 3\_- Secretarial Memo, Managing Grant, Cooperative Agreement and Other Significant Documents dated April 12, 2017.

**Question No. 5.: Did the Grants Officer identify if there were any conflicts of interest.**

**Response No. 5:**

The OSMRE Grants Specialist did not identify any conflict of interest with the NAS Cooperative Agreement.

**Question No. 6:** Deliverables from NAS to OSMRE such as: quarterly reports, briefings, public briefings, SF425 draw-downs and reviews and approvals from Grant Officer of those drawdowns.

**Response No. 6:**

| See Attachment 4 – Pending [\(Mick and Yetunde preparing package\)](#).

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