



# Thinking Like a Fed

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# Today's Basic Premise

Working with Federal government agencies in support of research and other sponsored projects should not be an “us vs. them” situation.



After 19 years as a university research administrator, the way I was viewed by some when I became a Fed in 2001



# 21 Ways We Are All Alike

- Food
- Family
- Friends
- Dreams
- Love
- Humor
- Talent
- Pain
- Weakness
- Strength
- Fear
- Belief
- Music
- Communication
- Work
- Respect
- Appreciation
- Beauty
- Security
- Learning
- Sleep

after Lezlie Mitchell

# Five Ways We Are Alike

- We all have a story
- We are all afraid
- We are all stuck in our own skin
- We are all valuable
- We are all imperfect

after Eric Torrence





# First, Remember a Federal Agency Sponsor Is Part of the Federal Government

- Must support federal policy, to enforce applicable laws, cost principles and administrative requirements. The agency doesn't MAKE the rules.
- Must support President's initiatives and policies.
- Stewards of federal funds



# Thinking Like a Fed: Second, the Various Agencies Funding Research Are Different

- Some agencies have a relatively broad mission; others have missions that are (by comparison) relatively narrow
- Larger agencies have more funds which can mean more flexibilities
- Even within the NIH and NSF: some Institutes/Centers (ICs) and Programs have broader missions than others. Typically, larger ICs/Programs have more funds which often means more flexibilities.



# A Fed's Perspective When Considering Challenging Complex Situations

Factors we consider critical in making decisions in 'tough' situations:

- Have we "listened" enough to really understand all the issues and objectives of the situation?
- What is best from a scientific or programmatic perspective (how will this impact the original scope/aims of the project)?
- What will best serve the investment of the taxpayer in the project?
- Could the action create issues for protection of human subjects or other sensitive issues?



# Fed Perspective: Additional Considerations

Additional considerations a Fed considers in making decisions:

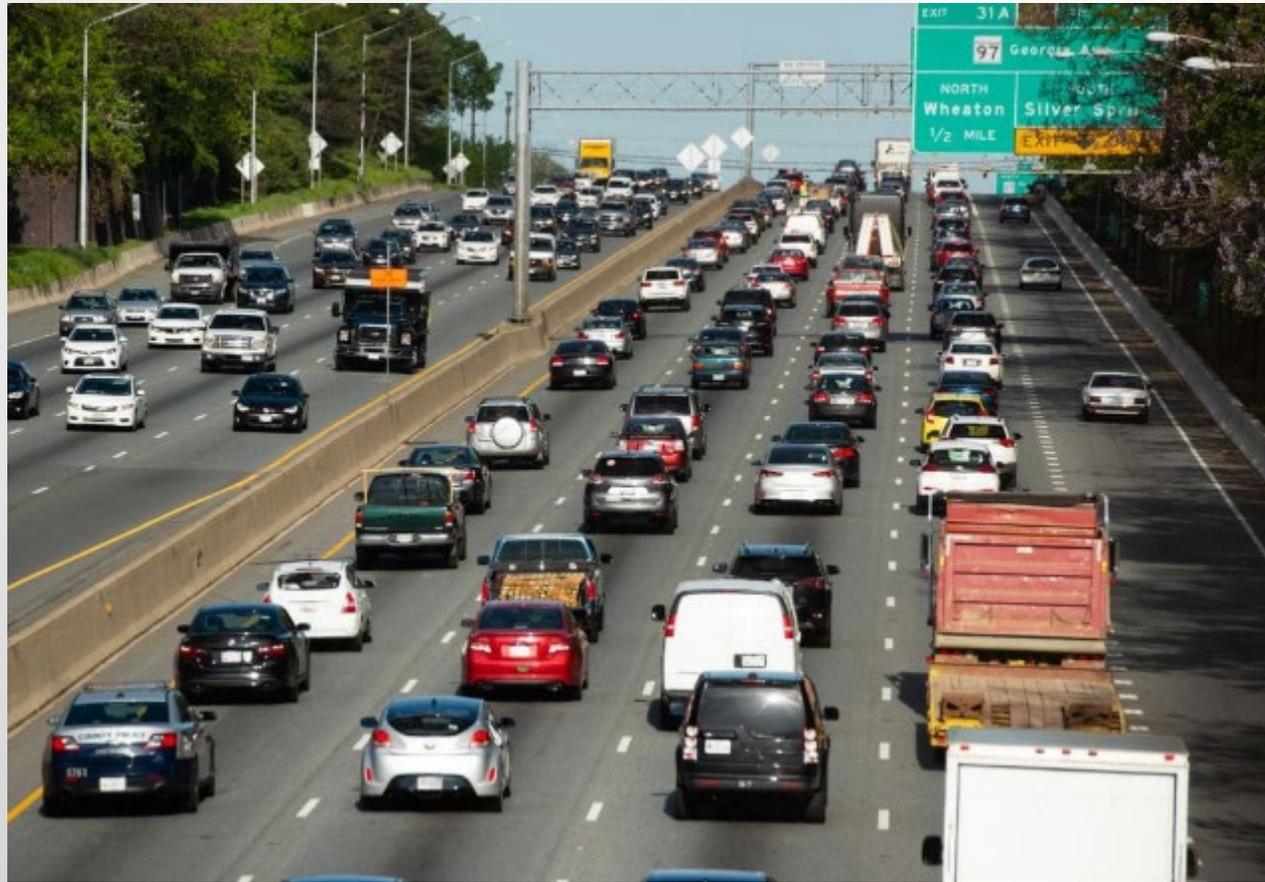
- Will an action create a precedent which will limit flexibility in the future?
- Is an action consistent with agency or other Federal policy?
- Do we have the necessary funds to support the proposed arrangements?
- How would this play if presented on the evening news or the front page of .....?
- Can/should I take this action before the end of the fiscal year?



# Questions We Ask When Considering Challenging Complex Situations

- What is in the best interest of the program and/or science?
- What is in the best interest of the agency relative to its mission?
- What is in the best interest of the recipient?
- What is in the best interests of the PI(s)?
- Is there an opportunity for a 'win/win'?

# Washington DC is No. 3 in Traffic Congestion



# How Does DC Traffic Impact Grantees?

- Many Feds work outside 9 to 5
- Numbers of Feds commute from as far away as Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and southern Virginia
- Telework is much more prevalent than it was five years ago



# Things that Can Make a Fed's Life "Difficult"

- Late appropriations and associated decision making
- Fourth quarter of the fiscal year
- Late progress reports
- Incomplete applications and prior approval requests
- Carryover requests....**ESPECIALLY** when incomplete
- Grant transfers/change of institutions

# What a Fed May Not Always Fully Appreciate About a Grantee or PI

- The competing interests that may impact a grantee's or PI's priorities and actions
- That their agency may not be the only focus of the PI. It rarely is the only focus of the grantee institution
- A particular research administrator's role in the institution

# Let's Have a Discussion...

Why does "X" happen?

# Enhancing Effectiveness with Feds

- Ask for translations
- Follow directions
- Adhere to deadlines
- Respond to inquiries
- Read the Notice of Award
- Follow the rules
- Be aware of the time of day and of year
- Don't be afraid to contact the agency



# Resources...

## Your Organization

- Sponsored Programs/ Grants and Contracts Office
- Accounting office
- Internal auditor
- IRBs, IACUCs and other compliance offices

## Federal Agency

- Agency websites
- Personnel identified in websites, FOAs, and Notices of Award
- FOAs and Grants.gov
- Grants policies and/or 2 CFR 200

# Questions?

