

# **National Science Foundation COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan**



**November 2022**

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## Introduction

The National Science Foundation (NSF), along with the rest of the Federal Government, is committed to addressing essential work requirements consistent with best public health practices. Of paramount concern to NSF and the Administration is the health and safety of staff, onsite contractor employees, and individuals interacting with the Federal workforce. As set forth in the January 20, 2021 Executive Order (EO) 13991, [\*Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing\*](#), the policy of the Administration is “to halt the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) by relying on the best available data and science-based public health measures,” including taking a science-based and data-driven approach to safety in Federal workplaces.

In accordance with EO 13991, [\*Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing\*](#), NSF has developed this plan to delineate the safety measures it will follow to ensure the health and safety of its staff, contractor employees, and visitors to the greatest extent possible. This plan has been updated to comply with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum [\*M-21-15\*](#), Safer Federal Workforce Task Force (Task Force) [\*guidance\*](#) including the [\*Model Agency COVID-19 Safety Principles\*](#) (last updated September 15, 2022), OMB Memorandum M-21-25, [\*Integrating Planning for a Safe Increased Return of Federal Employees and Work Environment\*](#), the President’s Executive Order (EO) 14043, [\*Requiring Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination for Federal Employees\*](#), and EO 14042, [\*Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors\*](#).

The plan includes measures to protect health, such as with regard to mask-wearing, post-exposure precautions, and isolation in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance. The plan identifies the team responsible for monitoring and evaluating health and safety measures, and recommending changes as needed.

The guidance in this plan is reflected in the Workplace Safety: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) posted on InsideNSF. The FAQs will be updated whenever the guidance in this plan changes, and staff will be notified through the Weekly Wire and other means, as appropriate.

## Goal

The health and safety of the NSF workforce, contractor employees, and visitors is NSF’s highest priority. NSF leadership, in partnership with AFGE Local 3403, has worked to provide additional flexibilities for staff under NSF’s telework and remote work policy to address individual circumstances. In addition, NSF has established safety measures aligned to the latest guidance from the CDC, the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force, and established public health best practices, based on evolving understanding of the pandemic. NSF will regularly monitor and reassess these measures to ensure the health and safety of its workforce and visitors to the greatest extent possible.

## COVID-19 Coordination Team

The members of NSF’s COVID-19 Coordination Team include:

- Assistant General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel

- Chief Acquisition Officer and Division Director, Division of Acquisition and Cooperative Support
- Deputy Division Director, Division of Human Resource Management
- Deputy Division Director, Division of Information Systems
- Deputy Office Head, Office of Budget, Finance and Award Management
- Deputy Office Head, Office of Equity and Civil Rights
- Deputy Office Head, Office of Information and Resource Management (chair)
- Deputy Office Head, Office of International Science and Engineering
- Division Director, Division of Administrative Services
- Division Director, Division of Institution and Award Support
- Senior Advisor, Office of Integrative Activities

The COVID-19 Coordination Team coordinates with NSF's Senior Agency Official for Privacy as needed.

The COVID-19 Coordination Team meets as needed to review compliance with NSF's COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan, protocols, and policies; consider and—following consultation with the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force—implement potential revisions to NSF's COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan, protocols, and policies consistent with Task Force and CDC guidance; ensure NSF's COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan, protocols, and policies are broadly communicated to agency staff and, as appropriate, onsite contractor employees, visitors to NSF facilities, and in-person attendees at NSF-hosted meetings, events, and conferences; and evaluate any other operational needs related to COVID-19 workplace safety.

The COVID-19 Coordination Team coordinates decisions with the General Services Administration, where appropriate, and the lessor's designated representative.

The COVID-19 Coordination Team provides recommendations to the Head of the Office of Information and Resource Management and Chief Operating Officer for final decision. Staff may submit questions and concerns regarding COVID-19 workplace safety to [covid-concerns@nsf.gov](mailto:covid-concerns@nsf.gov). Please note, this mailbox is not anonymous.

### **COVID-19 Community Levels**

CDC has set recommendations related to [COVID-19 Community Levels](#), which measure the impact of COVID-19 on health and healthcare systems and inform the appropriate prevention strategies to utilize at a given time. NSF uses the COVID-19 Community Levels (e.g., Low, Medium, or High) as defined by the CDC as the metric for measuring the public health risk from COVID-19. For NSF headquarters, we monitor the level for Alexandria City, Virginia. NSF monitors the COVID-19 Community Level for Alexandria weekly and updates safety protocols to reflect any change. The Division of Administrative Services (DAS) will check the COVID-19 Community Level for Alexandria City, Virginia on Friday and update the banner at the top of the COVID-19 page on InsideNSF for the coming week. The updated safety protocols, informed by the COVID-19 Community Level, will go into effect on the following Monday and remain in effect through the subsequent Sunday.

## **Vaccination**

In implementing EO 14042 and EO 14043, NSF will comply with all relevant court orders, including by following relevant OMB and Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance.

EO 14043 and Federal Employees: To ensure compliance with an applicable nationwide preliminary injunction, which may be supplemented, modified, or vacated, depending on the course of ongoing litigation, NSF will take no action to implement or enforce the COVID-19 vaccination requirement pursuant to Executive Order 14043 on Requiring Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination for Federal Employees. Any aspects of this COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan related to the vaccination requirement pursuant to EO 14043 are not in effect and will not be implemented or enforced by NSF while the injunction is in place. NSF considers Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignees and Fellows as Federal employees for this purpose.

E.O. 14042 and Federal Contractors: One or more court orders currently prohibit the enforcement of requirements of EO 14042 on Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors against certain parties and within certain locations. At this time, consistent with guidance from OMB and the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force, NSF will take no action to enforce compliance with any contract clause implementing EO 14042 regardless of party or location. See the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force website for more information, including the latest guidance regarding the implementation and enforcement of EO 14042: [For Federal Contractors](#) | [Safer Federal Workforce](#).

## **Leave**

### *Leave to obtain vaccination*

Staff who seek any non-required dose of an FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine during work hours will be granted up to 4 hours of administrative leave and should not use duty time. The administrative leave will cover the time it takes to travel to the vaccination site, receive the vaccine dose, and return to work. If an individual needs to spend less time getting the vaccine dose, only the needed amount of administrative leave will be granted. Staff should obtain advance approval from their supervisor before using administrative leave for purposes of obtaining a COVID-19 vaccine dose. Staff will not be credited with administrative leave or overtime work for time spent getting a vaccine dose outside their tour of duty.

### *Leave for post-vaccination recovery*

Staff may be granted up to 2 workdays of administrative leave if they have an adverse reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine dose that prevents them from working (i.e., no more than 2 workdays for reactions associated with a single dose). Staff may take other appropriate leave (e.g., sick leave) to cover any additional absence.

### *Leave to accompany a family member being vaccinated*

Staff will be granted up to 4 hours of administrative leave to accompany a family member (as defined in OPM's leave regulations, see 5 CFR 630.201) who is receiving any COVID-19 vaccination dose, including boosters. If an employee needs to spend less time accompanying a

family member who is receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, they should only be granted the needed amount of administrative leave. Staff should obtain advance approval from their supervisor before being permitted to use administrative leave for COVID-19 vaccination purposes. Staff will not be credited with administrative leave or overtime work for time spent outside their tour of duty helping a family member get vaccinated.

#### *Leave related to isolation due to probable or confirmed COVID-19*

If an employee is subject to isolation due to being infected with COVID-19 and is unable to telework, the employee may request sick leave, as weather and safety leave would be unavailable. Staff may also request accrued annual leave and other forms of paid or unpaid leave in this situation as appropriate. (See OPM CPM 2020-02, February 7, 2020).

If an employee is on official government travel and gets infected with COVID-19, the employee should telework if they are able to safely do so, otherwise, they may request sick leave, use accrued annual leave or other forms of earned paid time off (e.g., compensatory time off or credit hours), access a voluntary leave bank, or use unpaid leave in this situation, as appropriate.

#### **Mask-Wearing**

Pursuant to EO 13991, and consistent with CDC guidance, when the [COVID-19 Community Level](#) for Alexandria City, VA is High, all individuals—including staff, onsite contractor employees, and visitors who are 2 years or older —must properly wear a high-quality [mask or respirator](#) indoors in the facility, regardless of their vaccination status, except for limited exceptions outlined below, including in offices, conference rooms, and all other communal and work spaces. This includes when staff are interacting with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities.

When the [COVID-19 Community Level](#) for Alexandria City, VA is Low or Medium, individuals generally do not need to wear a mask in the NSF headquarters building, except where required by Federal, State, Tribal, territorial, or local laws, rules, or regulations. Individuals can wear a mask when the [COVID-19 Community Level](#) for Alexandria City, VA is Low or Medium if they so choose.

NSF will post and update signs and post information online on the COVID-19 page on InsideNSF making clear what mask-wearing requirements apply in the NSF building.

Pursuant to EO 13991 and consistent with CDC guidance for the indoor transportation corridor and public transportation conveyances, individuals must wear high-quality [masks or respirators](#) (such as an N95) when in NSF-operated aircraft, boats and other maritime transportation conveyances, and buses with multiple occupants. In these conveyances, occupants can remove their masks or respirators for safety reasons or for brief periods of time while eating, drinking, or taking medication. Mask-wearing is not required for outdoor areas of conveyances, if any. Mask-wearing in these NSF-operated conveyances is not required if there is a single occupant or if the occupants are all co-habitants. In NSF-operated vans, cars, trucks, and other motor pool

passenger vehicles, NSF recommends individuals wear high-quality masks or respirators (such as N95s) when there are multiple occupants.

High-quality masks or respirators include respirators that meet U.S. or international standards (e.g., N95, KN95, KF94), masks that meet a standard (e.g., ASTM), or “procedure” or “surgical”-style masks.

When individuals are required to wear a high-quality mask or respirator (such as an N95):

- Masks and respirators should be well-fitting and worn consistently and correctly (over mouth and nose).
- Masks or respirators should be worn in any common areas or shared workspaces (including open floorplan office space, cubicle embankments, and conference rooms).
- Individuals do not need to wear masks or respirators when outdoors.
- Individuals may temporarily remove their masks when they are alone in an office with floor to ceiling walls and a closed door, or for a limited time when they are eating or drinking and maintaining distance from others.

Masked individuals may be asked to lower their masks briefly for identification purposes in compliance with agency safety and security requirements.

Surgical masks are available from the NSF mailroom for individuals who are required to wear a high-quality mask or respirator and do not have one.

Individuals for whom wearing a mask raises a disability or religious issue can submit requests for accommodations along with required documentation to the Office of Equity and Civil Rights at [rarequest@nsf.gov](mailto:rarequest@nsf.gov). Contractor employees who require a reasonable accommodation should contact their supervisors and request that the supervisor discuss the need with their contracting officer.

If an individual who is required to wear a mask is not eligible for an accommodation and is not wearing a mask, the individual will be reminded to wear a mask in accordance with Federal government-wide policy requiring mask-wearing in Federal buildings. If the individual refuses, they will be reported to their supervisor, and may be barred from the building for the safety of others while appropriate disciplinary measures are considered.

## **Visitors**

NSF hosts are responsible for ensuring their visitors follow mask-wearing and other safety protocols while in the NSF building.

## **Official Travel**

There are no Government-wide limits on official travel (i.e., travel conducted under an official travel authorization), regardless of an individual’s vaccination status. CDC recommends that



individuals make sure they are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines before travel. NSF recommends that travelers consider being tested for current infection with a viral test as close to the time of departure as possible (no more than 3 days) before travel. Travelers must adhere strictly to CDC guidance for [domestic](#) and [international](#) travel before, during, and after official travel. Travelers must check their destination's COVID-19 Community Level before traveling, and wear a high-quality mask or respirator (such as an N95) while on-duty and around others indoors at their destination, if the COVID-19 Community Level in the county where their destination is located is HIGH. Travelers must make sure they understand and follow all travel restrictions put in place by State, Tribal, local, and territorial governments. Travelers should prepare to be flexible, as restrictions, policies, and circumstances may change during their travel.

#### *Travel for individuals with known exposure*

Official travel may be approved for asymptomatic individuals who have had a known [exposure](#) to someone with COVID-19 within the past 10 days, consistent with NSF's travel policy. If the individual remains without COVID-19 [symptoms](#) before traveling, then the individual must, in addition to the standard pre-travel safety protocols related to COVID-19 stated above:

- Wear a high-quality [mask or respirator](#) (such as an N95) the entire time they are on-duty and around others indoors for the full duration of their travel that falls within the 10 full days after their last known exposure;
- Not travel on public transportation such as airplanes, buses, and trains if they will not be able to wear a high-quality mask or respirator (such as an N95) when around others indoors for the full duration of their travel within the 10 full days after their last known exposure; and
- Follow other aspects of [post-exposure protocols](#), including the requirement for individuals with a known exposure to be tested for COVID-19 after 5 full days following their last known exposure (ideally, on or after day 6)—note that this testing may need to occur while the individual is traveling, and the individual does not need to wait for the results of this post-exposure diagnostic test to undertake official travel, including return travel.

If the individual develops COVID-19 symptoms after official travel has been approved, they may not undertake further official travel, including under that previously approved travel authorization, and instead must follow the guidance on travel for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms below.

#### *Travel for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms or a positive COVID-19 test*

Official travel (i.e., travel conducted under an official travel authorization) may not be approved for individuals who have COVID-19 symptoms and are waiting for an initial diagnostic viral test result or for individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 for at least 5 full days after their first day of symptoms, or after the date of the initial positive diagnostic viral test for asymptomatic individuals. If an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 has returned to working onsite at the NSF building or interacting with members of the public as part of their



official responsibilities (once they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their other symptoms are improving consistent with CDC guidance), then they may be approved for official travel. Such travelers must, in addition to the other standard pre-travel instructions related to COVID-19 stated above:

- Wear a high-quality [mask or respirator](#) (such as an N95) the entire time they are on-duty and around others indoors for the full duration of their travel that falls within the period they are otherwise required to wear a high-quality mask or respirator after ending isolation;
- Not travel on public transportation such as airplanes, buses, and trains if they will not be able to wear a high-quality mask or respirator (such as an N95) when around others indoors for the full duration of their travel that falls within the period they are otherwise required to wear a high-quality mask or respirator after ending [isolation](#); and
- Follow other aspects of [post-isolation protocols](#).

If after official travel has been approved, the individual's COVID-19 symptoms recur or worsen, then the individual may not undertake further official travel, including under any previously approved travel authorization, and not enter the NSF building or interact with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities, restarting at day 0 of [isolation](#) protocols.

### **Meetings, Events, and Conferences**

All in-person attendees at any meetings, conferences, or events sponsored by NSF must comply with relevant COVID-19 safety protocols, including as they relate to any mask-wearing when COVID-19 Community Levels are High.

To be consistent with Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance, NSF has paused asking in-person attendees at NSF-hosted meetings, events, and conferences to provide information about their COVID-19 vaccination status, where COVID-19 safety protocols at the meeting, event, or conference location do not vary based on vaccination status. This is true regardless of COVID-19 Community Levels.

NSF will not require that in-person attendees at agency-hosted meetings, events, and conferences need to be able to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test based on their vaccination status.

### **Symptom Screening**

If an employee, contractor, or visitor has fever or chills, or if they have other new or unexplained symptoms consistent with COVID-19 such as new or unexplained onset of cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, new or unexplained loss of taste or smell, or new or unexplained muscle aches, they should not enter the NSF building. If an individual suspects that they have COVID-19, such as because they have new or unexplained COVID-19 symptoms, but they do not yet have test results, they should not enter the NSF building and should [get tested](#) if they have not already done so.

All staff and contractor employees working onsite at NSF and all visitors must complete a self-conducted symptom screening before entering a Federal facility. Only staff, contractors, and visitors who answer “no” to the following screening questions, which are posted at the entrance to the building, will be permitted access. Staff must also answer “no” to the screening questions prior to interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities.

1. Have you experienced any of the following symptoms in the past 48 hours?
  - fever or chills
  - new or unexplained cough
  - new or unexplained muscle aches
  - new or unexplained loss of taste or smell
2. Are you isolating because you tested positive for COVID-19 OR are sick and suspect that you have COVID-19 but do not yet have test results?
3. Have you been exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 in the last 10 days AND has it been more than 5 full days after your last exposure AND you do not have a negative COVID-19 test result from a test taken 5 full days after your last exposure to the person who tested positive for COVID-19?

Individuals who answer “yes” to any of these questions are instructed that they may be at increased risk of COVID-19, and they should leave the building, return home, and contact their primary care provider and supervisor.

Any individual, regardless of vaccination status, who develops fever, chills, or other new or unexplained symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or who tests positive for COVID-19, while onsite during the workday must immediately wear a high-quality mask or respirator (such as an N95), promptly leave the workplace, and notify their supervisor. The individual or their supervisor should notify the Safety and Occupational Health Manager, Barry Carlisle, at [safety@nsf.gov](mailto:safety@nsf.gov), as soon as possible. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 must follow NSF protocols on [isolation](#), consistent with Task Force and CDC guidance.

Supervisors should contact the [Pay and Benefits Services Branch](#) in the Division of Human Resource Management if they have questions regarding staff who have to stay out of the workplace or leave the workplace during the workday due to COVID-19 symptoms.

### **Post-Exposure Precautions**

Individuals who are [known to have been exposed to someone with COVID-19](#), regardless of their vaccination status, must:

- Wear a high-quality [mask or respirator](#) (such as an N95) while indoors at the NSF building or interacting indoors with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities as soon as possible after notification of exposure and continue to do so for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed;
- Take [extra precautions](#), such as avoiding crowding and physically distancing from others, when they know they are around people who are [more likely to get very sick from COVID-19](#) while onsite at the NSF building or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities, for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed (for purposes of calculating the 10 full days, day 0 is the

day of their last known exposure to someone with COVID-19, and day 1 is the first full day after their last known exposure); and

- Watch for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed (for purposes of calculating the 10 full days, day 0 is the day of their last known exposure to someone with COVID-19, and day 1 is the first full day after their last known exposure).

### **Required Testing for Those Known to Have Been Exposed**

As part of NSF testing protocols, and pursuant to EO 13991 and consistent with CDC guidance, staff and contractor employees who are known to have been exposed to COVID-19 and are onsite at NSF or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities must be tested for current infection with a [viral test](#) at least 5 full days after their last known exposure (ideally, on or after day 6). The test can be both self-administered and self-read by the individual. The individual must send an email to their supervisor certifying when they took the test and that they received a negative result.

If the individual tests negative, they must continue to follow the above precautions for 10 full days from the date they were last known to have been exposed. If they test positive, or if they at any time develop COVID-19 symptoms, they must follow agency protocols on [isolation](#).

If the individual that has been known to be exposed to COVID-19 is not working onsite at the NSF building or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities within 10 days of the known exposure, then they are not required to be tested.

If the individual that has been known to be exposed to COVID-19 had tested positive for COVID-19 with a viral test within the previous 30 days and subsequently recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms, then they do not need to get tested after a known exposure. If the individual that had been known to be exposed to COVID-19 had tested positive for COVID-19 with a viral test within the previous 31-90 days and subsequently recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms, then they should be tested using a viral antigen test according to [CDC guidance](#).

Federal employees are eligible to be reimbursed for costs related to diagnostic testing. IPA assignees and Fellows are not eligible for reimbursement under existing appropriations law. Individuals should obtain a COVID-19 test from their healthcare provider, local pharmacy, or local testing site and use Form 1164, available on InsideNSF, to request reimbursement for any associated expenses. Individuals must provide copies of their receipts for costs related to obtaining a viral test and should enter the following fields on the form:

- Expense Type: Professional Liability Insurance
- Expense Purpose: Test Reimbursement

Questions about reimbursement should be sent to [dfmpab@nsf.gov](mailto:dfmpab@nsf.gov).

### **Isolation and Post-Isolation Precautions**

Any individual with probable or confirmed COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status, must not enter the NSF building or interact with members of the public in person as part of their

official responsibilities, consistent with CDC guidance on [isolation](#) and monitor their symptoms. This includes people who have an initial positive diagnostic [viral test](#) for COVID-19, regardless of whether or not they have symptoms, and people with symptoms of COVID-19, including people who are awaiting test results or have not been tested.

Individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 and never developed symptoms may return to working onsite in the NSF building or interacting with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities after 5 full days following their positive COVID-19 test (day 0 being the day the individual was tested).

Individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 and had symptoms may return to working onsite in the NSF building or interacting with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities after 5 full days from the onset of symptoms (day 0 being the day of symptom onset), once they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their other symptoms are improving.

If an individual had moderate illness (if they experienced shortness of breath or had difficulty breathing) or severe illness (they were hospitalized) due to COVID-19, or they have a weakened immune system, the individual must delay returning to working onsite in the NSF building or interacting with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities for a full 10 days. If an individual had severe illness or has a weakened immune system, they should consult their healthcare provider before ending isolation. If an individual is unsure if their symptoms are moderate or severe or if they have a weakened immune system, they should talk to a healthcare provider for further guidance.

#### *Post-Isolation Precautions*

Once an individual has returned to working onsite in the NSF building or interacting with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities after having tested positive for COVID-19 and isolated consistent with [CDC guidance on isolation](#), the individual must continue to take precautions consistent with CDC guidance for at least 10 full days after their first day of symptoms, or after the date of a positive viral test for asymptomatic individuals, including wearing a [high-quality mask or respirator](#) (such as an N95) when around others, avoiding eating and drinking around others, avoiding environments such as dining facilities, gyms, or other places where they may need to be unmasked around others, and avoiding being around people who they know are at [high risk for severe disease from COVID-19](#).

In relation to mask-wearing after returning from isolation, individuals can opt to take two viral antigen tests authorized by the FDA, starting on day 6. With two sequential negative tests 48 hours apart, the individual may remove their mask sooner than day 10. If either of their antigen test results are positive, the individual should continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until they have two sequential negative results. This may mean that the individual would continue wearing a mask and testing beyond day 10.

If at any point their COVID-19 symptoms recur or worsen, the individual may not enter the NSF building or interact with members of the public as part of their official responsibilities, restarting at day 0, consistent with CDC recommendations on [isolation](#) and NSF's safety protocols.

### **Confidentiality and Privacy**

All medical information collected from personnel, including vaccination information, test results, and any other information obtained as a result of testing and symptom monitoring, will be treated confidentially in accordance with applicable law and policies on confidentiality and privacy, and accessible only by those with a need to know in order to protect the health and safety of personnel. NSF consults with the NSF Senior Agency Officials for Privacy on matters related to the collection and handling of personally identifiable information. Staff should contact the Division of Human Resource Management for all questions relating to personal medical data.

The NSF protocols do not currently vary based on vaccination status. To that end, NSF has paused any efforts to require, request, or collect vaccination status information from any individual—including employees, contractor employees, visitors to NSF headquarters, or in-person attendees at agency-hosted meetings, events, and conferences—for the purposes of implementing agency COVID-19 workplace safety protocols.

NSF will continue to preserve vaccination information collection systems and the information collected to date from employees in accordance with the Federal Records Act and other records requirements. Furthermore, it is important to preserve this information as COVID-19 workplace safety protocols may change in the future, or collection of this information from Federal employees may otherwise need to resume.

### **Ventilation and Air Filtration**

Based upon currently available information and guidance from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, the NSF facility was built with an HVAC system that implements best practices for fresh air, temperature, and humidity to control infectious disease. The facility design incorporates the recommended high-efficiency filtration level, has over double the recommended outside air volume, and uses MERV 13 filters.

NSF has worked with building engineers to maximize ventilation in the building. The fans are kept running 24/7 for continuous exchange of air.

NSF will continue to review available options for further improvements. NSF will consider, in consultation with occupational safety and facilities experts as appropriate, making use of portable air cleaners with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters in indoor common areas and meeting rooms where crowding cannot be avoided.

### **Physical Distancing and Avoiding Crowding**

When COVID-19 Community Levels are Medium or High, NSF encourages individuals, regardless of vaccination status, to consider avoiding crowding and physically distancing themselves from others in indoor common areas and meeting rooms. NSF will post signage with this recommendation when COVID-19 Community Levels are Medium or High in Alexandria City.

**Collective Bargaining**

Consistent with President Biden’s policy to support collective bargaining, NSF works to satisfy applicable collective bargaining obligations under 5 U.S.C. Chapter 71 when implementing workplace safety plans. There may be collective bargaining obligations over the impact and implementation of the Agency Model Safety Principles and CDC guidelines. NSF will promptly notify AFGE Local 3403 of the actions it intends to take to require compliance with CDC guidelines providing a meaningful opportunity for AFGE Local 3403 to consult, as appropriate, as provided in Section 2(c) of EO 13991. NSF will provide draft plans to AFGE Local 3403 in order to provide a meaningful opportunity for the union to consult.

Implementation of Safer Federal Workforce Task Force principles and guidelines is essential to protect the health and safety of NSF staff, onsite contractor employees, and individuals interacting with the Federal workforce in Federal buildings, in federally controlled worksites, and on Federal lands. NSF begins communicating with AFGE Local 3403 as soon as possible and otherwise satisfy any applicable collective bargaining obligations under the law at the earliest opportunity. NSF consults with the Division of Human Resource Management and Office of General Counsel to determine appropriate labor relations obligations.