



SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY ACTIVITIES AT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Office of the Chief Scientist
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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BACKGROUND

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a strong commitment to ensuring the highest level of integrity in all aspects of the Department's engagement in scientific and technological activities and the use of scientific information in policy making. USDA has encouraged and nurtured a culture of Scientific Integrity within our agencies, offices and laboratories. However, employees and staff may not be aware of new developments related to Scientific Integrity. Therefore, USDA will train all employees on an "Awareness" of Scientific Integrity with biennial role-based training for those: who communicate about, make decisions based on, or conduct scientific activities for Department.

This poster will describe the historical background of Scientific Integrity; the organizational structure of USDA, and how we have incorporated Scientific Integrity into our processes at a large Federal Department with over 100,000 employees

SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY DEFINED

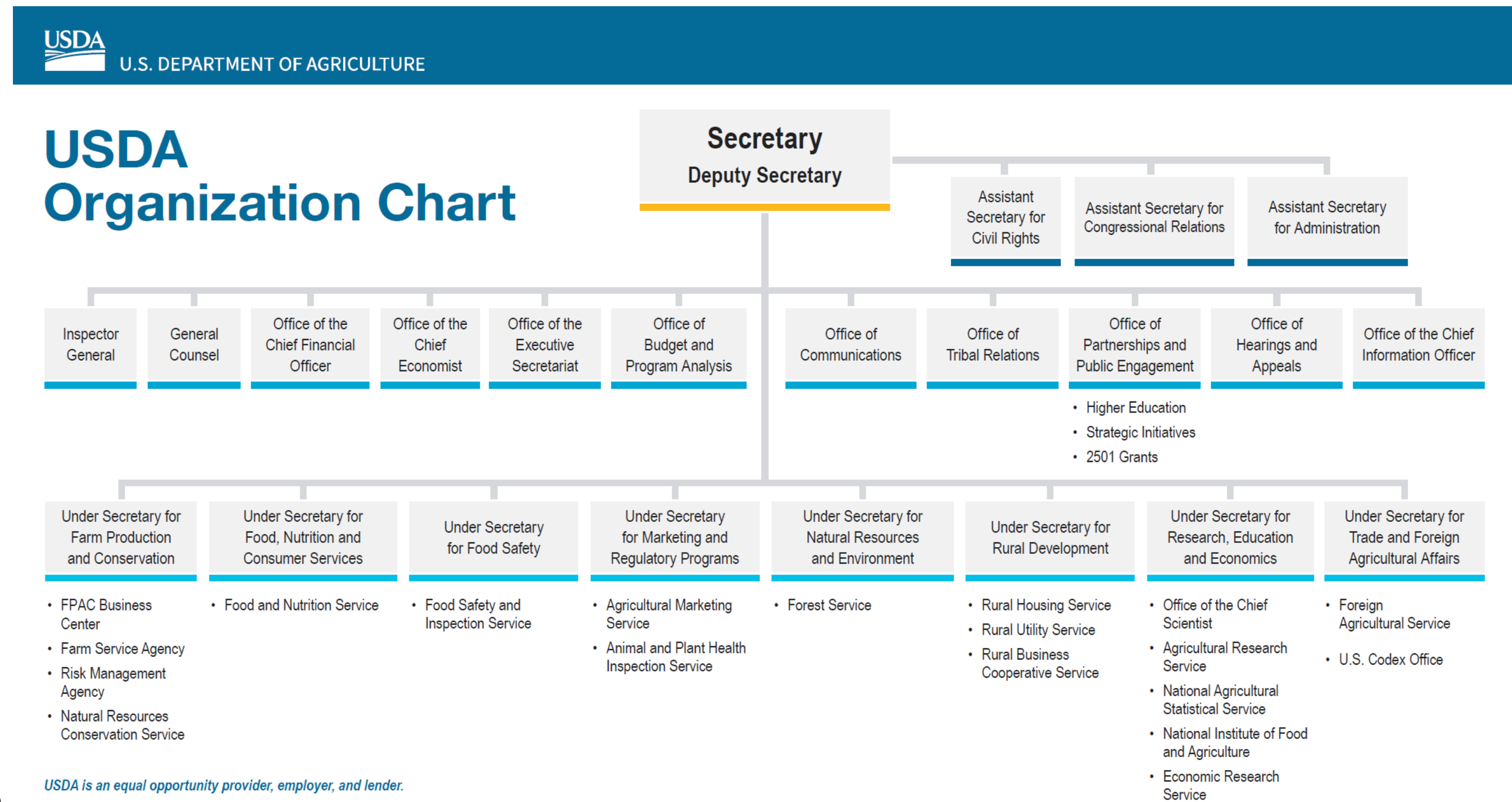
Scientific Integrity. The adherence to professional practices, ethical behavior, and the principles of honesty and objectivity when conducting, managing, using the results of, and communicating about science and scientific activities. Inclusivity, transparency, and protection from inappropriate influence are hallmarks of scientific integrity.

ABOUT USDA

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is made up of 29 agencies and offices with nearly 100,000 employees who serve the American people at more than 4,500 locations across the country and abroad.

We provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on public policy, the best available science, and effective management.

We have a vision to provide economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to preserve our Nation's natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds, and healthy private working lands.



USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Key points covered by the Scientific Integrity policy (continued):

It is the policy of USDA to:

- USDA officials, including public affairs officers, may neither ask nor suggest that USDA scientists and technology experts alter the presentation of their scientific findings in a manner that may compromise the objectivity or accurate representation of those findings.
- USDA scientists and technology experts are free to express differing scientific opinions about scientific findings (data and results) and USDA officials may not retaliate against these employees for their differing opinions.
- Encourage USDA scientists and other USDA employees involved in USDA scientific activities to interact with the broader scientific community, in a manner that is consistent with Federal rules of ethics, job responsibilities, and existing agency policies, and to the extent that is practicable given the availability of funding to support such interactions and any budgetary restraints. This includes:
 - Encouraging publication of research findings in peer-reviewed, professional, or scholarly journals;
 - Encouraging presentation of research findings at professional meetings;
 - Allowing service on editorial boards or as editors of professional or scholarly journals;
 - Allowing participation in professional societies, committees, task forces, and other specialized bodies of professional societies, including removing barriers to serving as officers or on governing boards of such societies, to the extent allowed by law; and
 - Allowing honors and awards to be received for contributions to scientific activities, discoveries, and products with the goal of minimizing, to the extent practicable, disparities in the potential for private-sector and public-sector scientists and engineers to accrue the professional recognition of such honors or awards.
- Continue to comply with the requirements of the Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA), and its expanded protections in the Whistleblower Protection Enhance Act (WPEA)

SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY AT USDA

What is the purpose of USDA Scientific Integrity Policy (SIP)?

- To instill public confidence in USDA research and science-based public policymaking.

Science, and public trust in science, thrives in an environment that shields scientific data and analyses as well as their use in policymaking from political interference or inappropriate influence. As federal employees, we must act in a manner that is deserving of the public's trust, and with the utmost integrity, in everything we do as public servants.

How does the USDA SIP accomplish its purpose?

- By articulating the principles of scientific integrity and the roles and responsibilities of USDA employees in upholding these principles.
- By establishing defined procedures for responding to allegations that scientific integrity has been compromised (DM 1074-001).

Why do we care about "Scientific Integrity"?

- Scientific integrity fosters trust in the research activities that we engage in and the science-based decisions that we make.
- Our employees care about it, Congress cares about it, and the public cares about it!

To whom does the USDA SIP apply?

All USDA employees, *political and career*, who:

- Engage in, supervise, manage, or report on scientific activities
 - Analyze and/or publicly communicate information resulting from scientific activities
 - Utilize information derived from scientific activities in policy and decision making
- Applies to more than just research and scientific staff!
Applies to every USDA Mission Area and Agency!

Key points covered by the Scientific Integrity policy:

USDA's policy states our expectations and *affirmative behaviors* within the Department. Consequently, it is the policy of USDA to:

- Promote a culture of scientific integrity.
- Select and retain candidates for scientific and technical positions at USDA based on the candidate's scientific and technical knowledge, credentials, experience, and integrity, and hold them and their supervisors to the highest standard of professional and scientific ethics, including those described in the *USDA Code of Scientific Ethics*.
- Ensure the quality, accuracy, and transparency of all scientific information used to support policy and decision making
- Facilitate the free flow of scientific and technological information, and support scientific integrity in the communication of scientific findings and products. Including:
 - Encourage, but not require, USDA scientists to participate in communications with the media regarding their scientific findings (data and results).
 - Ensure that the work and views of USDA scientists are accurately represented in USDA media communications.
 - Ensure that USDA scientists can communicate their scientific findings (data and results) objectively without political interference or inappropriate influence, while at the same time complying with USDA policies and procedures for planning and conducting scientific activities, reporting scientific findings, and reviewing and releasing scientific products.
 - Ensure that scientific information is accurately represented in all external communications including responses to Congressional inquiries, testimony and other external publications.
- USDA officials, including public affairs officers, may not direct USDA scientists and technology experts to alter scientific and technological research findings for political or public relations purposes

IMPLEMENTATION

Education and Outreach:

It is the policy of USDA to ensure that all employees and contractors receive training in scientific integrity when hired. Additionally, all employees and contractors specifically covered by the Scientific Integrity policy must receive biennial Role-Based training.

Additionally, many of the Agencies and Staff Offices will engage in topic-based Scientific Integrity discussions or seminars to help to identify challenging situations, potential pitfalls and the optimal outcomes for employees. An example topic: publishing in scientific journals as a federal employee.

Oversight:

Department-wide responsibility for Scientific Integrity policy, training, education, investigations and oversight is delegated to the:

- Departmental Scientific Integrity Officer

Agencies and staff offices support this oversight by appointing:

- Agency Scientific Integrity Officers

Handling allegations of "Loss of Scientific Integrity"

- To ensure that USDA has well-defined and robust mechanisms in place for reviewing and resolving allegations that scientific integrity has been compromised, USDA issued Departmental Manual 1074-001 ("Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Compromised Scientific Integrity"). The manual establishes a multi-phase process for responding to scientific integrity concerns in a timely and objective manner, and establishes safeguards for those who report scientific integrity concerns.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY

- 2009**
 - U.S. Presidential Memorandum on "Scientific Integrity"
- 2010**
 - OSTP Memorandum on "Scientific Integrity"
<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/scientific-integrity-memo-12172010.pdf>
- 2011**
 - Initially established through the issuance of USDA Secretary's Memorandum 1074-001
- 2013**
 - Revised and issued as Departmental Regulation (DR) 1074-001 ("Scientific Integrity" policy)
- 2016**
 - DR 1074-001 ("Scientific Integrity") revised and re-issued
 - Issued along with Departmental Manual (DM) 1074-001, which established specific procedures for responding to scientific integrity concerns
- Jan 2021**
 - Presidential Memorandum entitled "Memorandum on Restoring Trust in Government Through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking"
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/memorandum-on-restoring-trust-in-government-through-scientific-integrity-and-evidence-based-policymaking/>
- Jan 2022**
 - OSTP issued report of Scientific Integrity Task Force on "Protecting the Integrity of Government Science"
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/01-22-Protecting-the-Integrity-of-Government-Science.pdf>
- Jan 2023**
 - White House released the 2023 "Framework for Federal Scientific Integrity Policy and Practice"
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/01-2023-Framework-for-Federal-Scientific-Integrity-Policy-and-Practice.pdf>
- May 2024**
 - DR 1074-001 ("Scientific Integrity") and corresponding Department Manual (DM 1074-001) revised and re-issued to incorporate the guidance from the 2023 Framework.
<https://www.usda.gov/directives/dr-1074-001>
<https://www.usda.gov/directives/dr-1074-001>

HARMONIZATION ACROSS U.S. GOVERNMENT

The following figure describes the process that we have initiated, with leadership from the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), for iterative improvement of the integrity of our processes and to harmonize the implementation of Scientific Integrity across the U.S.G.

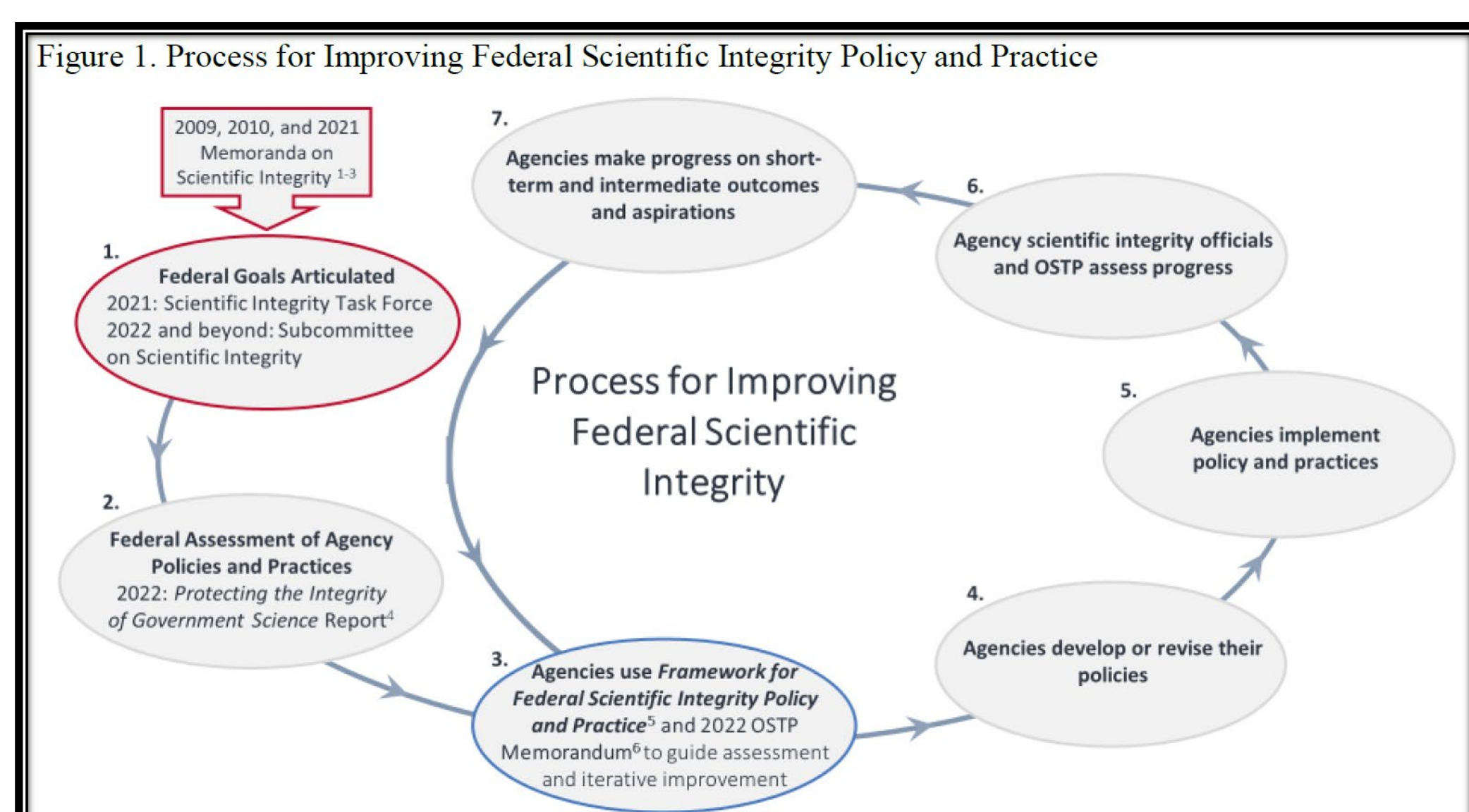


Figure from the 2023 "Framework for Federal Scientific Integrity Policy and Practice".