

# The Republic of Science Grants

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IPSC

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# An era of weaponized science funding

SCIENCEINSIDER | SCIENCE AND POLICY

## New NIH grant terminations target transgender studies—even in mice

Science has identified more than two dozen halted grants amid Trump's transgender crackdown, right as NIH suspends its own researchers who worked on topic

6 MAR 2025 • 2:30 PM ET • BY SARA REARDON

7. In consideration for entering into this Agreement the United States shall restore to Columbia those Terminated Grants by HHS or NIH upon the Effective Date of this Agreement. The Terminated Grants by Ed. and any other terminated contracts are excluded from this provision.

SCIENCEINSIDER | SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

## Exclusive: NIH suspends dozens of pathogen studies over 'gain-of-function' concerns

Trump executive order leads to pauses on U.S.-funded research into TB, influenza, COVID-19, and other diseases, dismaying some scientists

11 JUL 2025 • 5:15 PM ET • BY JON COHEN, JOCELYN KAISER

## *National Science Foundation Terminates Hundreds of Active Research Awards*

The agency targeted grants focused on diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as research on misinformation.

STAT+ | EXCLUSIVE

## NIH bans all future grants to universities with DEI programs or Israel boycotts

New rules are next step in Trump assault on campus diversity programs and antisemitism

# Argument

- Science grantmakers ubiquitously govern the research enterprise—not just innovation rate & direction

# Prior Literature

- Grantmakers possess expertise, hold grantees accountable, and build infrastructure & careers
  - E.g., Price (2019)
- Grants are often combined with patents, tax incentives, etc.
  - E.g., Hemel & Ouellette (2013, 2019); Sarnoff (2013); Arrow (1962)

# Prior Literature

- Patents shape science culture and processes
  - E.g., Eisenberg (1987); Merges (1996) Rai (1999); Lee (2013)
- Admin scholars have focused on grant oversight in other contexts
  - E.g., Rosenthal (1989); Pasachoff (2014, 2020, 2022); Lawrence, Pasachoff, & Price (2025)

# Argument

- Grantmakers created federally organized self-regulation: the republic of science grants
- Grantmakers govern research **directions, processes, results,** and **environments**
- Grantmakers leverage **funds, data, and prestige**

# Research Directions

- NIH decisions shape what is studied & by whom
  - NIH has allocated ~\$1.18 tn in grants since 1948 (real \$)
  - Price (2019); Azoulay et al (2019); Sampat & Lichtenberg (2011); Li (2017); Shvadron et al (2025); Myers (2020)
- But decisions are largely delegated to scientists themselves
- NIH public datasets and prestigious committees also influence direction of research

# Research Processes

- NIH invented the modern IRB
- The Clinical Center gave NIH early access to ethical questions
- NIH scientists created self-regulatory boards, and entrenched them in the 1970s
  - Stark (2012); McCarthy (2008); Rothman (1991); Schrag (2010)



# Research Results

- NIH not only promotes research diffusion, but also regulates it
- NIH gatekeeps human genetic data (~5m individuals), storing results behind data-access committees
- Requests must meet stringent requirements for access, controlling who can access & on what terms

# Research Environments

- The NIH regulates the environment in which research takes place
- NIH responded to 2018 National Academies report by threatening to defund grantees who harassed employees
- Although NIH can and does remove PIs, it relies on local reporting and university investigation

# Lessons

- Today's NIH governance is unique in its disregard of scientific self-governance
- Attacks on peer review, purported gain-of-function research, institutional biosafety committees, etc.

# Lessons

- Historical grantmaker governance comes with the costs and benefits of self-regulation
- Strong at recognizing promising projects and processes
- Weak at oversight when researcher & public interests diverge

# Thank you!

All thoughts welcome: [doni.bloomfield@fordham.edu](mailto:doni.bloomfield@fordham.edu)