

Research grants frozen at the National Institute of Health under President Trump. What now?

President Trump re-entered office on the 20th of January, 2025, threatening mass deportations, end to diversity programs, and even hindered the academic world. Usually, as new administrations start, short pauses are taken to restructure the strategy of the NIH for the next four years. However, researchers in the US seem almost shocked to hear that meetings and travel would be cancelled until at least the 1st of February.

Why is this a major issue? The NIH is the world's largest public biomedical funder, a lifeline for a range of new and upcoming researchers. Typically, research grants are awarded after two separate panels of specialists in a scientific field have reviewed the project proposal. However, reports emerged that these grant-review panel meetings would all be cancelled until the 2nd of February, which in turn could lead to a large number of meetings being postponed or further cancelled, leaving all researchers and members of the board in a lurch. Therefore, even the most critical research cannot be approved for a grant at this time.

Another part of the NIH that is being jeopardised is the diversity program on the NIH website. Trump and his administration have always opposed diversity programs, labelling them as “wasteful” and “radical”. This has led to diversity supplements being removed, which in the past, provided early-career researchers with up to \$125,000, a maximum of five years of training, and often even mentorship opportunities. Furthermore, materials from the Office of DEI and the agency's initiative (UNITE) that served as a way to end structural racism in the biomedical workplace have disappeared, making it seem like they were never there in the first place.

What now? Officially, President Trump is yet to nominate a new NIH director. This means that confirmation from Congress will also be extremely delayed. However, most researchers believe that once this new director is nominated, the work of the NIH will rapidly restart. Therefore, it is vital for students and doctors to continue working on their proposals, while also advocating for the support needed to make advancements in the science world. All told, although the new change in presidency has majorly hampered the work of the NIH, hopefully, peer reviews should restart soon once a director is nominated, leading to grants being approved and radical discoveries being made.



CITATIONS

Kozlov, Max. ““Never Seen Anything like This”: Trump’s Team Halts NIH Meetings and Travel.” *Nature*, 23 Jan. 2025, www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00231-y, <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-025-00231-y>. Accessed 27 Jan. 2025.

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