

MAY 2026



Executive Summary

NIH Funding Delays Raise Concerns for Research Pipeline

National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding activity has slowed significantly during the early months of FY2026, with new medical research spending trailing historical funding levels by nearly [\\$1 billion](#). Fewer new and [competitive grants](#) have been issued due to delayed review cycles, staffing shortages, additional internal review procedures, and lingering disruptions from the federal government shutdown. These delays are contributing to staffing uncertainty, stalled projects, delayed hiring, and increased administrative burden at research institutions nationwide. Together, these disruptions risk delaying research timelines and destabilizing workforce continuity. Read more [here](#).

NSF Award Reductions Reflect Broader Federal Funding Uncertainty

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded significantly fewer [research grants](#) than usual during FY2026, with funding levels remaining well below historical averages midway through the fiscal year. The slowdown reflects delayed budget approvals and disagreements over federal [funding priorities](#). These delays have created uncertainty for research institutions, investigators, graduate students, and scientific staff who rely on federal support.

These funding disruptions are compounded by significant leadership instability at NSF. The agency has operated without a permanent director since April 2025, and Senate confirmation for nominee Jim O'Neill remains pending. In late April 2026, the White House also dismissed the entire National Science Board, leaving NSF without a confirmed director, deputy director, or oversight board. Former NSF leaders have urged restoration of agency leadership, citing risks to U.S. competitiveness in AI, semiconductors, and biotechnology. Read more [here](#).

Policy & Regulatory Updates

NIH Updates Data Access Requirements for Controlled Research Repositories

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) released updated guidance related to developer access to controlled-access research data repositories, expanding the applicability of its Developer Terms of Access across a broader range of datasets. The revised policy clarifies requirements for Developer Use Statements, establishes standardized review procedures through the NIH Developer Data Access Committee, and reinforces institutional responsibilities related to data security, confidentiality, and compliance.

The update also strengthens oversight requirements by introducing periodic renewal of data access permissions, mandatory reporting of data misuse or security incidents, and enhanced confidentiality protections. These changes reflect NIH's continued emphasis on responsible data sharing practices and strengthened governance of sensitive research data, with implications for institutions and researchers managing or accessing controlled datasets. Read more [here](#).

HHS Leadership Changes Continue to Affect Public Health Operations

Ongoing leadership transitions and restructuring efforts within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) continue to affect federal public health operations and agency coordination. Over the past year, HHS has experienced significant workforce reductions, leadership turnover, and organizational restructuring across several agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Recent developments include continued changes in CDC leadership, delays in appointing permanent agency leadership, modifications to advisory committees such as the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and evolving vaccine recommendation processes. Together, these changes have introduced additional uncertainty regarding public health governance, policy implementation, and coordination between federal, state, and local public health entities. Read more [here](#).

Upcoming HRA Events

Stay connected through HRA's upcoming programs and gatherings. These events are designed to spark collaboration, share knowledge, and strengthen our community. Please note that registration for most HRA-hosted events is open exclusively to members.

May Grants Administration Community Open Mic

**May 21, 2026, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET
(Virtual)**

As many of our member organizations gear up to launch new funding cycles, we are dedicating this session to the critical mechanics of the pre-award phase. With application numbers on the rise across the board as we've heard from the spring members meeting, this is a timely opportunity to discuss pre-award related topics.

[LEARN MORE](#)

- **May 28, 2026, 3:00–4:00 PM ET: [Virtual]** [DEI Learning Community Open Mic](#)
- **June 24, 2026, 2:00-3:00 PM ET: [Virtual]** [June Grants Administration Community Open Mic](#)



Federal Policy Resources & Tools

- **[Research!America]** [Research!America Funding & Appropriations Resources](#)
- **[American Society of Hematology]** [ASH NIH Funding Factsheet](#)
- **[National Council of Nonprofits]** [National Council of Nonprofits Public Policy Resources](#)
- **[FASEB]** [FASEB Advocacy Toolkit](#)

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Have questions, suggestions, or need assistance?

Melissa Lena is your primary point of contact for:

- Event registration assistance
- General HRA questions and resources

✉ **Contact:** melissa@healthra.org

Dr. Christine Riordan is your primary point of contact for:

- Federal Policy Newsletter feedback and content suggestions
- Membership inquiries and support

✉ **Contact:** christine@healthra.org

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We're committed to supporting our members and welcome your input on how we can continue to enhance our services and communications. If you know an organization that could benefit from HRA membership, encourage them to learn more [here](#).



Melissa Lena