

White House Office of Management and Budget Federal Grant Proposed Rule Puts Taxpayer Investments in Health in Jeopardy

On May 29, the White House Office of Management and Budget published a proposed regulation that would overhaul federal grant review, replacing objective merit with political alignment as the chief criteria for grant awards. If finalized, it would likely compromise medical research, public health and health care access for vulnerable populations.

Moving authority for grantmaking from agencies to OMB threatens scientific independence and undermines congressional intent for use of taxpayer resources IDSA calls on Congress to block the implementation of this rule and ask the Administration to withdraw it.

OMB Proposal Rule Endangers Medical Research and Public Health

- Requires that grants be aligned with an Administration's priorities.
 - Research priorities could change every four years, which doesn't give enough time to establish laboratories and staff, complete studies and produce outcomes. This could jeopardize all infectious diseases research, including in areas like vaccine development, antimicrobial resistance, HIV and viral hepatitis.
 - Infectious diseases researchers aim to stay ahead of evolving threats to ensure Americans are prepared for emerging infectious diseases before outbreaks begin. Greater instability in research funding will erode that preparedness.
 - Public health priorities should be driven by local needs, which can differ based upon the geographic and demographic characteristics of individual communities. For example, some communities, based on their locations, may need more resources for tick-borne diseases, while others may need funds to respond to local measles outbreaks.
- Allows arbitrary grant cancellations at any time, for any reason, causing many negative impacts:
 - Removes the stability needed to recruit and retain researchers and public health professionals. ID research and public health are already facing serious workforce shortfalls that will only be exacerbated by this rule.
 - Upends care for seriously ill patients participating in research studies.
 - Restricts the ability of state and local health departments to respond to fast-moving outbreaks or other emergencies, as funding uncertainty makes it even more difficult to maintain infrastructure and staffing that must be in place to prepare for and detect outbreaks before they begin.
 - Puts at risk routine public health activities, including surveillance, public communication, vaccination, and other disease prevention programs.
 - Undermines stability for health care facilities that serve vulnerable populations, such as clinics receiving Ryan White funds and community health centers. Significant funding uncertainty makes it very difficult to retain staff to care for patients.

- Restricts scientists' ability to collaborate with one another and with clinicians, public health professionals and patients by dramatically limiting their ability to share their findings through conferences, journals and public communications.
 - Erodes the transparency of federally supported research findings and dramatically slows scientific progress.
 - Restricts the ability of clinicians to access new scientific information, greatly slowing the ability of research advances to reach patients.