

Directive on NIH Priorities

Agency: National Institutes of Health

Office of the Director

Action: Directive

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

National Institutes of Health

Office of the Director

EFFECTIVE DATE: February 21, 2025

Restoring Scientific Integrity and Protecting the Public Investment in NIH Awards

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the largest public funder of biomedical and behavioral research in the world. The public trusts NIH with substantial funds to foster creative discoveries that will improve health and prevent disease in this Country. Accordingly, NIH is committed to promoting only the highest level of scientific integrity, public accountability, and social responsibility in the programs it funds. And NIH promises to prioritize the funding of projects that will generate a high return on the public's investment, so that taxpayer dollars are not going to waste. Every dollar should be used to make Americans live longer, healthier lives.

This mission requires NIH to ensure that it is not supporting low-value and off-mission research programs, including but not limited to studies based on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and gender identity. While this description of NIH's mission is consistent with recent Executive Orders issued by the President, I issue this directive based on my expertise and experience; consistent with NIH's own obligation to pursue effective, fiscally prudent research; and pursuant to NIH authorities that exist independently of, and precede, those Executive Orders.

Research programs based primarily on artificial and non-scientific categories, including amorphous equity objectives, are antithetical to the scientific inquiry, do nothing to expand our knowledge of living systems, provide low returns on investment, and ultimately do not enhance health, lengthen life, or reduce illness. Worse, DEI studies are often used to support unlawful discrimination on the basis of race and other protected characteristics, which harms the health of Americans. Therefore, it is the policy of NIH not to prioritize such research programs.

Likewise, research programs based on gender identity are often unscientific, have little identifiable return on investment, and do nothing to enhance the health of many Americans. Many such studies ignore, rather than seriously examine, biological realities. It is the policy of NIH not to prioritize these research programs either.

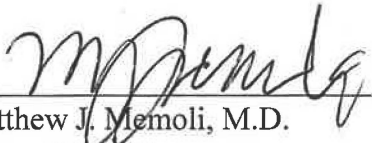
For these reasons and pursuant to, among other authorities, 42 U.S.C. § 282(b) and 45 C.F.R. Part 75 (45 C.F.R. §§ 75.207, 75.210, 75.371–373),¹ the Director of NIH hereby directs:

NIH personnel shall conduct an internal review of all contract solicitations and notices of funding opportunities; applications pending Type 1 and Type 2 awards; existing awards; cooperative agreements; and other transactions. Such review shall be aimed at ensuring NIH grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and other transactions do not fund or support low-value and off-mission research activities or projects – including DEI and gender identity research activities and programs. NIH personnel should also ensure grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and other transactions are free from fraud, abuse, and duplication, and are being implemented consistent with federal law.

This Directive shall be implemented by all relevant NIH personnel, including but not limited to those in the Office of Extramural Research, Office of Intramural Research, and the Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives. Grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and other transactions deemed inconsistent with NIH's mission may, where permitted by applicable law, be subject to funding restrictions, terminated or partially terminated, paused, and/or not continued or renewed, in compliance with all procedural requirements.

Notwithstanding this Directive, and consistent with any court orders that may apply, no open award disbursements may be paused in reliance upon Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-25-13 or any Executive Order underlying that Memorandum. Previous instructions ordering the immediate release of such funds remain in effect. Also, consistent with any court orders that may apply, this Directive does not instruct personnel to condition or withhold federal funding pursuant to Section 4 of Executive Order 14,187 (Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation) based on the fact that a healthcare entity or health professional provides care or treatment.

Dated: February 21, 2025


Matthew J. Memoli, M.D.
Acting Director of NIH

¹ To be clear, these citations are illustrative, not exhaustive. Further explanation of the range of statutory and regulatory authorities that support actions taken pursuant to this Directive will be issued as appropriate.