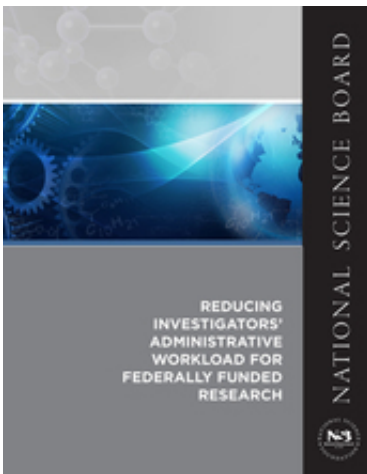


Excessive regulations turning scientists into bureaucrats

May 1 2014



The NSB report, "Reducing Investigators' Administrative Workload for Federally Funded Research," recommends limiting proposal requirements to those essential to evaluate merit; keeping reporting focused on outcomes; and automating payroll certification for effort reporting. Credit: National Science Board

Excessive regulations are consuming scientists' time and wasting taxpayer dollars, says a report released today by the National Science Board (NSB), the policymaking body of the National Science Foundation and advisor to Congress and the President.

"Regulation and oversight of research are needed to ensure accountability, transparency and safety," said Arthur Bienenstock, chair

of the NSB task force that examined the issue. "But excessive and ineffective requirements take scientists away from the bench unnecessarily and divert [taxpayer dollars](#) from research to superfluous grant administration. This is a real problem, particularly in the current budget climate."

Thousands of federally funded scientists responded to NSB's request to identify requirements they believe unnecessarily increase their administrative workload. The responses raised concerns related to financial management, grant proposal preparation, reporting, personnel management, and institutional review boards and animal care and use committees (IRBs and IACUCs).

Scientists and institutions pinpointed regulations they believe are ineffective or inappropriately applied to research, and audit and compliance activities that take away research time and result in university over-regulation.

"Escalating compliance requirements and inconsistent audit practices directly impact scientists and the time they have to perform research and train students and staff," said Kelvin Droegemeier, NSB vice chairman and a member of the task force.

The report, *Reducing Investigators' Administrative Workload for Federally Funded Research*, recommends limiting proposal requirements to those essential to evaluate merit; keeping reporting focused on outcomes; and automating payroll certification for effort reporting. The NSB further recommends an evaluation of animal research, conflict of interest, and safety and security requirements, and encourages universities to review their IRB and IACUC processes to achieve rapid approval of protocols.

The report cites a continued lack of consistency in requirements within

and between federal agencies and recommends the creation of a permanent high-level, inter-agency, inter-sector committee. The committee would address the recommendations in the NSB and other reports; identify and prioritize, with stakeholder engagement, additional opportunities to streamline and harmonize regulations; and, help standardize the implementation of new requirements affecting investigators and institutions.

"Streamlining research regulations and making requirements more consistent across federal agencies is in the best interest of scientists and taxpayers," said Bienenstock.

More information: Report:
[nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsb1418](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsb1418)

Provided by National Science Foundation

Citation: Excessive regulations turning scientists into bureaucrats (2014, May 1) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-05-excessive-scientists-bureaucrats.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--