



CONSORTIUM *of* SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

Trump Administration Releases Preliminary Details on FY 2018 Budget | March 16, 2017

The Trump Administration has released preliminary, high-level details of its fiscal year (FY) 2018 budget request, referred to as a “skinny budget.” Full budget details are expected sometime in May.

There are few surprises in the President’s “safety and security” budget blueprint. Major reductions are proposed for nondefense discretionary programs (including research accounts) in order to finance \$54 billion in increases for the Department of Defense. Of course, to achieve such a reallocation, Congress would need to act to adjust the [budget caps](#) that are currently governing defense and nondefense discretionary spending; the President cannot unilaterally shift funds from nondefense accounts to defense under current law.

For now, the budget only includes proposals for Cabinet-level departments and a handful of other “major” agencies. For example, it includes preliminary details for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) (which would take a \$6 billion hit) but not for the National Science Foundation (NSF). Instead, NSF appears to be lumped in with “Other Agencies,” which collectively would receive a 10 percent cut in FY 2018 (see the chart below). This DOES NOT necessarily mean that NSF is slated for a 10 percent cut; we will have to wait to see the details in May.

The budget proposes elimination of *federal* funding for entire agencies, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities (see the action alert [here](#)), National Endowment for the Arts, Institute for Museum and Library Services, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, to name a few. Of course, for many of these agencies, this is not the first time they have been targeted for elimination or cuts.

It is important to remember that the President’s budget is just one step in the annual appropriations process. Congress still holds the power of the purse. Many, if not most, of the proposals in the President’s budget will be dead on arrival in Congress. Case in point, Congress is currently working to appropriate a \$2 billion increase for NIH in the final FY 2017 appropriations bill (to be completed within the next month). Lawmakers are not likely to turn around and cut the agency by \$6 billion in FY 2018.

This will for sure be a difficult appropriations year for the research community (and many others). But COSSA is busy shoring up our Congressional champions and working with our partners throughout the science advocacy community to mitigate any damage to research accounts this year. We are hopeful that we will come out largely intact.

Read on for additional details on the FY 2018 proposal as known so far (note that comparisons are made to FY 2017 funding, which is currently still operating under a continuing resolution). For departments and agencies that support research but are not addressed below (such as DOJ, DOD, HUD, or DHS), it is because details are not available on the relevant research accounts.

We will share additional details as they become available, and will call on our members to take action in the weeks and months ahead. Be sure to [subscribe to our action alerts](#) if you are not already receiving them.

Departmental Proposals

Department of Health and Human Services

The President is seeking \$15.1 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in FY 2018, a decrease of 17.9 percent from current funding. This would include an 18 percent or \$5.8 billion reduction to the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, for a total budget of \$25.9 in FY 2018. This is in stark contrast to the \$2 billion increase that Congress is poised to provide NIH in FY 2017, which should be completed within the next month. However, the proposed cuts exclude “funds for program integrity and implementing the *21st Century Cures Act*.” The budget also states that it includes unspecified “additional structural changes and consolidations” and “reduces [unstated] administrative costs and rebalance [sic] Federal contributions to research funding.”

In addition, the budget would:

- Require “a major reorganization of NIH’s Institutes and Centers to help focus resources on the highest priority research and training.”
- Eliminate NIH’s Fogarty International Center (FIC).
- Incorporate the **Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)**, NIH’s sister agency in HHS, within the NIH. No details, however, are provided on how this consolidation would be achieved. Given the cuts NIH would have to bear under the proposal and the fact that AHRQ’s mission significantly differs from NIH’s, it seems unlikely that the AHRQ’s portfolio of applied research on the health care system would receive the same level of attention and support it currently receives as an independent agency.

Department of Education

For the Department of Education, the President’s FY 2018 budget would provide \$59 billion, a reduction of \$9 billion or 13 percent below the FY 2017 funding level. The proposed budget would eliminate or reduce more than 20 categorical programs the Administration states “do not address national needs, duplicate other programs, or are more appropriately supported with State, local, or private funds.” Among them are **International Education programs**. Funding for the **Institution of Education Sciences** is not addressed in the preliminary details.

Other proposals include:

- Elimination of the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant program, which provides grants to undergraduate students with exceptional financial need.
- Level discretionary funding for the Pell Grant program and cancelation of \$3.9 billion from unobligated carryover funding (resulting in an overall cut to Pell).
- Cuts totaling \$193 million for the Federal TRIO and GEAR UP programs. The budget states that “funding to TRIO programs is reduced in [unidentified] areas that have limited evidence on the overall effectiveness in improving student outcomes,” and that funding provided to the GEAR UP program is for “continuation awards only, pending the completion of an upcoming rigorous evaluation of a portion of the program.”

In addition to reducing support for International Education programs in the Department of Education, the Administration also proposes unidentified reductions for the **State Department's Educational and Cultural Exchange (ECE) Programs**. However, the budget states that "ECE resources would focus on sustaining the flagship **Fulbright Program**, which forges lasting connections between Americans and emerging leaders around the globe."

Department of Agriculture

The President's budget would cut funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) by 21 percent below its current funding level, leaving it with \$17.9 billion for FY 2018. The request is somewhat of a mixed bag when it comes to research and data at USDA. The budget pledges support for "farmer-focused research and extension partnerships at land-grant universities," which are funded through the **National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**. It would preserve current levels of funding (\$350 million) for NIFA's **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)**, USDA's competitive grants program. Troublingly, however, the budget also would reduce funding for the USDA's statistical agencies, the **National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)** and the **Economic Research Service (ERS)**. While there are no specifics on the magnitude of these reductions, the budget would maintain funding for the NASS' Census of Agriculture, meaning NASS' other funding lines and the ERS would likely bear the brunt of the cuts.

The proposal also pledges to refocus research funding at the **Agricultural Research Service (ARS)**, the USDA's in-house research agency, to the "highest priority agriculture and food issues," which include "increasing farming productivity, sustaining natural resources, including those within rural communities, and addressing food safety and nutrition priorities." While ARS does not support social and behavioral science research, it was in the news in the early days of the Trump Administration after it was revealed that employees at the agency were told not to share information with the public, an order that has [since been rescinded](#), and was seen as a potential indicator of the new Administration's attitudes toward its science and statistical agencies.

Department of Commerce

The Department of Commerce would receive a total of \$7.8 billion, a 16 percent decrease from its current funding level. The President's proposal would provide \$1.5 billion, an increase of about \$100 million from current spending levels, to the **Census Bureau** to support its preparation for the 2020 Decennial Census. Language in the proposal states that the funds would be used for "fundamental investments in information technology and field infrastructure." However, the increase is likely a fraction of what is actually needed to successfully prepare for the next decennial census. The Bureau operates under a funding cycle in which spending is intended to ramp up in the years leading up to a decennial census. Under the current CR for FY 2017, the Bureau was allowed increased flexibility in how it spends its money, but no additional funding over FY 2016 (\$1.4 billion) has been provided so far. Details on funding for the Bureau's other programs and surveys, including the **American Community Survey**, are not available.

The budget would reorganize the statistical infrastructure of the Department, consolidating the "mission, policy support, and administrative functions of the **Economics and Statistics Administration** within the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Department of Commerce's Office of the Secretary."

Research within the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** (NOAA) would see a hit in a number of respects, including the elimination of a number of programs focused on coastal and marine management and, likely though unstated, NOAA's competitive climate change research programs. Funding is prioritized for NOAA's satellite and weather forecasting operations.

Other Agencies and Departments

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) would receive a comparatively minor cut compared to some other federal departments. It would receive \$19.1 billion in total, 0.8 percent below current spending levels. However, NASA's Earth science portfolio, which incorporates studies of the human population into its mission, would receive \$1.8 billion, a cut of \$102 million compared to current funding levels. The budget would reduce funding for Earth science research grants and eliminate four Earth science missions that have implications for studying the effects of climate change.

Environmental Protection Agency

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would be cut by \$2.6 billion, or 31 percent, leaving it with \$5.7 billion for FY 2018. This would also result in the elimination of 3,200 jobs at the agency. The EPA's Office of Research and Development would see a cut of nearly 50 percent, leaving it with \$250 million. The proposal would reduce support for extramural activities and "prioritize activities that support decision-making related to core environmental statutory requirements."

Department of Energy

The Department of Energy would receive \$28 billion, a 5.6 percent decrease from current funding levels. The proposal would cut the Department's Office of Science by \$900 million, about 17 percent, and pledges to support "the highest priority basic science and energy research and development." The budget would eliminate the Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARAP-E).

Other provisions

The President released a [*Presidential Executive Order on a Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch*](#) on March 13. This order directs the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to "propose a plan to reorganize government function and eliminate unnecessary agencies." Within 180 days of the order, the head of each agency must submit a plan to the OMB Director a proposal to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability – and if appropriate, reorganize – that agency. A notice will be posted in the Federal Register to allow for public comment on agency organization and function.

The following shall be considered by the Director of OMB when developing the proposed plan for each agency:

- Whether some function of an agency or program are better left to state governments, local governments, or the private sector.
- Whether the functions of an agency or program are redundant.
- Whether the administrative capabilities necessary for operating an agency are redundant.
- Whether the cost of continuing an agency or program are justified by the public benefit it provides.
- The cost of shutting down agencies.

Snapshot of Funding Proposals, by Agency

DEPARTMENT/AGENCY	FY 18 REQUEST	% CHANGE*
Agriculture	\$17.9 billion	-20.7%
Commerce	\$7.8 billion	-15.7%
Defense	\$574.0 billion	+10.0%
Education	\$59.0 billion	-13.5%
Energy	\$28.0 billion	-5.6%
Health and Human Services	\$65.1 billion	-16.2%
Homeland Security	\$44.1 billion	+6.8%
Housing and Urban Development	\$40.7 billion	-13.2%
Interior	\$11.6 billion	-11.7%
Justice	\$27.7 billion	-3.8%
Labor	\$9.6 billion	-20.7%
State, USAID	\$27.1 billion	-28.7%
Transportation	\$16.2 billion	-12.7%
Treasury	\$11.2 billion	-4.4%
Veterans Affairs	\$78.9 billion	+5.9%
Corps of Engineers	\$5.0 billion	-16.3%
Environmental Protection Agency	\$5.7 billion	-31.4%
General Services Administration	\$0.5 billion	+0.5%
NASA	\$19.1 billion	-0.8%
Small Business Administration	\$0.8 billion	-5.0%
Social Security Administration	\$9.3 billion	+0.2%
Other Agencies (including NSF)	\$26.5 billion	-9.8%

*Comparison is made to current funding levels as enacted in the *Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act*, which expires on April 28.

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