

## **Subject: Federal public access requirements—What faculty must know now**

**Date: April 15, 2026**

Dear colleagues,

Federal agencies now require immediate public access to publications and the underlying data from federally funded research, based on updated guidance from the Office of Science and Technology Policy (the 2022 OSTP Public Access Memorandum, or "[Nelson Memo](#)," issued August 25, 2022). Although the policy is not new, agencies are now implementing it, making compliance actions increasingly necessary at the time of publication.

As these requirements expand across agencies and enforcement increases, please review the following guidance. This information was prepared in partnership with the exceptional staff from the Northwestern University Libraries and the Galter Health Sciences Library and Learning Center to ensure your research remains compliant.

### **Compliance Requirements**

#### **Publications**

- In general, compliance is achieved by **depositing your Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) at the time of publication** to the designated agency repository (e.g., PubMed Central, DOE Pages, NSF Public Access Repository). Please note that different agencies may have specific requirements and workflows.
- Authors are not required to publish in an open access (OA) journal or pay article processing charges (APCs) to comply with federal public access policies. However, this may conflict with some journal or publisher copyright agreements.

#### **Data sharing**

Federal agencies require data underlying publications be made publicly accessible **at the time of publication**, unless restricted. This typically includes:

- Depositing data in an appropriate repository
- Providing sufficient metadata and documentation (e.g., data dictionaries, README files, standard operating procedures)
- Applying access controls where needed

**Always confirm—before submitting to a journal—that it allows compliance with your funder’s public access requirements** to avoid delays, additional costs, or noncompliance.

- Some journals and publishers allow immediate deposit of the final author-accepted manuscript in a repository with no embargo. Others may charge fees or require publishing costs to comply with specific requirements; in such cases:
  - Publishing costs (APCs) may be allowable under the terms of your grant.
  - Northwestern and BTAA have negotiated agreements with some publishers that waive APCs; a current list is available [here](#).

### **Why this matters**

Failure to comply may delay funding, affect future awards, and create institutional risk.

### **Support and resources**

Library and data services teams can help you determine the best compliance path for your specific funder, journal, and dataset. They are developing additional guidance and resources to support your compliance efforts and will share updates as they become available. If you have questions about a specific journal, manuscript, or funder requirements, please contact your library:

- Feinberg School of Medicine: Contact the Galter Health Science Library and Learning Center at [ghsl-ref@northwestern.edu](mailto:ghsl-ref@northwestern.edu) or Research Policy Librarian, Pamela Shaw, at [p-shaw2@northwestern.edu](mailto:p-shaw2@northwestern.edu)
- Pritzker School of Law: Contact Tom Gaylor, Associate Law Librarian for Scholarly Communications at [tom.gaylord@law.northwestern.edu](mailto:tom.gaylord@law.northwestern.edu)
- All other schools: Contact University Libraries at [library@northwestern.edu](mailto:library@northwestern.edu)
- For data compliance (all schools): Contact [researchdata@northwestern.edu](mailto:researchdata@northwestern.edu)

### **Additional information at Northwestern:**

- In-depth NIH public access policy: <https://libguides.galter.northwestern.edu/NIH-public-access>
- Federal funder public access policies: <https://libguides.galter.northwestern.edu/other-funders/public-access>
- Open Access publishing: <https://www.library.northwestern.edu/use-the-libraries/research-teaching/open-access-publishing/>
- Data management resources: <https://www.it.northwestern.edu/departments/it-services-support/research/data-storage/northwestern-university-research-data-management-resources.html>

### **Non-NU resources:**

- Detailed publications and data sharing requirements by federal agency: <https://researchsharing.sparcopen.org/>

Thank you for taking the time to review this information and for staying engaged with these changing requirements. Planning ahead, especially when choosing journals and preparing data, can make compliance much smoother. We encourage you to reach out early to library and data services staff with questions; they're here to help reduce administrative headaches, avoid surprises at publication time, and ensure your work is widely shared and aligned with federal expectations.

Best regards,

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Vice President for Research