

## U.S. National Science Foundation updates for 2025-2026

The [U.S. National Science Foundation](#) (NSF), an independent federal agency, has announced several changes over the past year. These changes include a [streamlined merit review process](#), a reorganization of the agency's structure, [implementation of recent executive orders](#), and an increased focus on [priority research areas](#) such as artificial intelligence and quantum information science.

NSF has introduced a streamlined merit review process as part of a comprehensive approach to improve efficiency and reduce administrative burden while maintaining the rigor of proposal evaluation. These changes are intended to lessen the workload of program staff, reduce demands on external reviewers, and increase responsiveness across the agency.

In addition, NSF is restructuring the agency to increase efficiency and responsiveness. As a result, the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) has reorganized from three divisions plus the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) into five sections alongside NCSES.

Dr. Marta Alfonso Durruty (a rotator from Kansas State University) continues to serve as program director in Biological Anthropology. Dr. Rebecca Ferrell now serves as section head for one of the newly formed SBE sections, Neuroscience, Cognitive, and Language Sciences, while continuing her work with Dr. Alfonso Durruty in Biological Anthropology.

The Biological Anthropology program continued to make awards in 2025; award information can be found [HERE](#). However, funding for the IDEAS program ended in 2025 and solicitations for the Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants (DDRIG) programs within SBE have been archived. Future solicitations to support early career researchers will be posted on NSF.gov and Grants.gov. The federal shutdown in October-November 2025 led to delays in panels and processes affecting fiscal year 2026.

Moving forward, SBE plans to release broad funding opportunities for SBE sciences that will accept proposals on a rolling basis. The directorate will continue to support research on human systems while aligning with NSF's priority areas.

We encourage the Biological Anthropology community to contact us with questions ([malfonso@nsf.gov](mailto:malfonso@nsf.gov); [rferrell@nsf.gov](mailto:rferrell@nsf.gov)) and to consult the linked resources for more information on priority areas and recent changes. We encourage everyone to consider how their research in biological anthropology may intersect with priority areas.