

A GUIDE TO FEDERAL PUBLIC ACCESS MANDATES

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INTRODUCTION

In August 2022, the U.S. Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), led by Dr. Alondra Nelson, released the Memorandum on Ensuring Free, Immediate, and Equitable Access to Federally Funded Research. This policy went into effect at the end of 2025 and requires that **all** scholarly publications and data resulting from federally funded research be made freely available upon publication, with no waiting period.

This policy supports the public's right to access research funded with taxpayer money. At a time of growing skepticism toward scientific institutions, this policy reinforces transparency and accountability in how federal funds are used. Additionally, it provides opportunities for broader access, increased research visibility, and promoting global equity by reducing access disparities between wealthier and less-resourced institutions.

KEY CHANGES 2013-2026

This updates the 2013 federal public access policy which previously only applied to agencies receiving over \$100 million in research funding. The new 2022 policy applies to all federal agencies, without the monetary restriction. The biggest change is the removal of the one year embargo before requiring public access. Research outputs now must be made publically available immediately upon publication, in accordance with each agency's policy.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU:

When you apply for federal funding

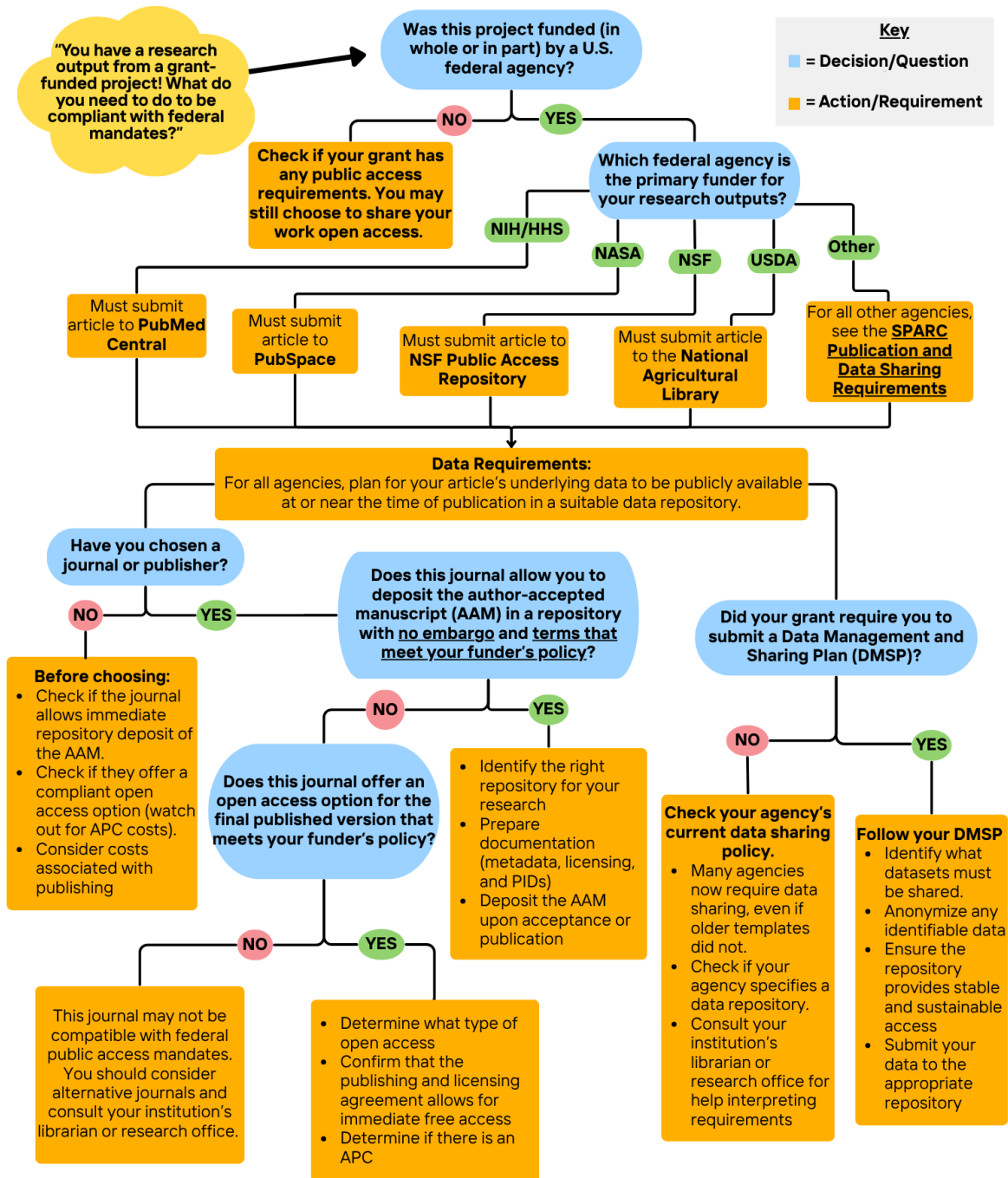
- *Review agency requirements*
 - Depending on the source of your funding, there may be specific guidelines or requirements for your research publications and data storage. You can use the SPARC Publication and Data Sharing Requirements to see policies by agency.
- *Data Management and Sharing Plans*
 - In response to this policy, many federal grants are now requiring grant proposals to include Data Management and Sharing Plans (DMSPs). These should clearly outline

how your research data will be produced, preserved, and shared. This is when you should also identify possible repositories for your research outputs.

- Some agencies provide template for specific portals for DMSPs. Check your agency for specific guidelines.
- *Budget Considerations*
 - Consider all the costs associated with your research. This should include research costs, personnel costs, publication costs, and data management costs.
 - Data management and potential APC costs can be included in your grant budget when allowed by funders. Check your agency for specific guidelines.

This decision tree walks through a typical compliance workflow step-by-step:

U.S. Federal Public Access Compliance



DOWNLOAD A COPY OF THIS DECISION TREE

The sections below define key terms, debunk common myths, and point to institutional support researchers can use at each step.

MYTH VS. REALITY

Navigating new requirements surrounding your research funding and publishing is tricky already. Avoid getting tripped up by common myths and misconceptions.

Myth 1: I have to pay an APC to comply with federal access mandates

Reality: Most federal policies allow compliance through depositing the AAM or published version in a compliant repository. APCs are one option, but not a requirement.

Myth 2: Public access means I must publish in an Open Access journal

Reality: Public access can be achieved through open access journals OR through repository deposit, as long as timing and licensing meet your funder's policy.

Myth 3: If my article is on the publisher's website, I'm done.

Reality: You are only done if that version and its licence satisfy your funders public access policy. Many agencies still expect deposit in a funder, institutional, or disciplinary repository.

Myth 4: My data are messy or contains sensitive information, so I can't share anything.

Reality: Many agencies expect that you share as much data as is ethically and legally appropriate, which may include de-identified, aggregated, or well-documented data subsets or clear explanations of why some data cannot be shared.

LEARN MORE

CAMPUS AND FUNDER SUPPORT

You do not have to navigate public access requirements alone. Common sources of support include:

- **Library:** Can help identify compliant journals and repositories, explain public vs. open access options, and support DMSP development and data sharing practices.

- **Research Offices:** Can help interpret funder policies, reviews proposals and DMSPs, and advise on grant budgets to include data management and publishing costs
- **Departments and colleges:** Can provide disciplinary norms around publishing and data, and may have staff who can help with public access compliance steps.
- **Publishers:** Can provide policies and tools that help explain specific journal, repository, and licensing options that align with federal mandates.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

- **Public Access:** making research outputs (articles, data, and other scholarly materials) from publicly funded research freely available to the public without paywalls or subscriptions.
- **Open Access:** a publishing and dissemination model where research outputs are free to read online and usually carry licenses that permit reuse (like Creative Commons), through models such as Green, Gold, Diamond, Hybrid, or Bronze Open Access.
- **Repository:** a service or platform that stores, preserves and provides access to research outputs. Common types include:
 - **Institutional repositories:** run by a university or research organization to host it's researchers work.
 - **Disciplinary repositories:** focused on a specific field or area of study
 - **Generalist repositories:** accept data or materials from any discipline.
- **Data Management and Sharing Plan (DMSP):** a document that describes how you will manage, document, store, and share your data during and after the project. It is often required in grant proposals and may be updated over the life of the project.
- **FAIR Data Principles:** guidelines that help make data Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable with a strong emphasis on machine-readability and good metadata. For a more detailed description, please see the FAIR Principles.
- **Metadata:** “data about data”: structured information that describes a resources (such as title, creator, dates, file formats) to support discovery, understanding, and reuse.
- **Persistent Identifiers (PID):** stable, long-lasting identifiers for digital objects or people, such as DOIs for articles and datasets and ORCID IDs for researchers.
- **Article Processing Charge (APC):** a funding model that some journals use to make articles open access. These typically cover editorial and production costs like peer-review and hosting, instead of (or in addition to) reader or library subscription fees.
- **Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM):** the final, peer-reviewed version of your article as accepted by the journal, before the publisher's typesetting and branding. This version is often the one you deposit in a repository to meet public access requirements.

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Sofia Carrasco is currently pursuing her Masters of Library and Information Science at the University of Maryland. She is also a Research and Teaching Fellow with UMD Libraries and a graduate assistant with Extended Studies. Sofia intends to pursue a career in academic librarianship and her professional interests include information literacy instruction, diversity and inclusion, first-generation students, and outreach services.