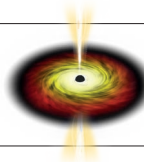


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The US president is pushing for deep budget cuts that would affect a broad range of research activities, from climate science to cancer biology.

POLITICS

Science under fire in Trump spending plan

White House proposal would slash support for energy, environment and health research.

BY SARA REARDON, JEFF TOLLEFSON, ALEXANDRA WITZE AND ERIN ROSS

When it comes to science, there are few winners in US President Donald Trump's first budget proposal. The plan, released on 16 March, calls for double-digit cuts for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). It also lays the foundation for a broad shift in US research priorities.

Rumours about the White House proposal

have swirled for weeks, alarming many researchers who depend on government funding — and science advocates who worry that the administration's stance will jeopardize US leadership in fields from climate science to cancer biology. It is not clear, however, how much of the plan will survive negotiations in Congress over the coming months.

“Cutting [research and development] funding from our budget is the same as cutting the engines off an airplane that's too heavy for take-off,” says Jason Rao, director of international affairs at the American

Society for Microbiology in Washington DC.

Also notable is what the budget does not mention: many programmes and even entire agencies, including the National Science Foundation (NSF). The president is expected to release a more complete budget request in May.

The Trump plan would cut funding for the NIH by 18%, to US\$25.9 billion, making it one of the hardest-hit research agencies. The document calls for a reorganization of the NIH's 27 institutes — including the elimination of the smallest, the Fogarty International Center. ▶