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# US science after a year of Trump

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20 January 2026

By Max Kozlov, Jeff Tollefson and Dan Garisto

Grant termination data analysis and visualization by Kim Albrecht

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**M**ore than 7,800 research grants terminated or frozen. Some 25,000 scientists and personnel gone from agencies that oversee research. Proposed budget cuts of 35% – amounting to US\$32 billion.

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The Trump administration disproportionately cancelled or froze projects on topics it disfavours, such as misinformation, vaccine hesitancy, infectious diseases and research on people from under-represented ethnic and gender groups, which it has called discriminatory and unscientific.

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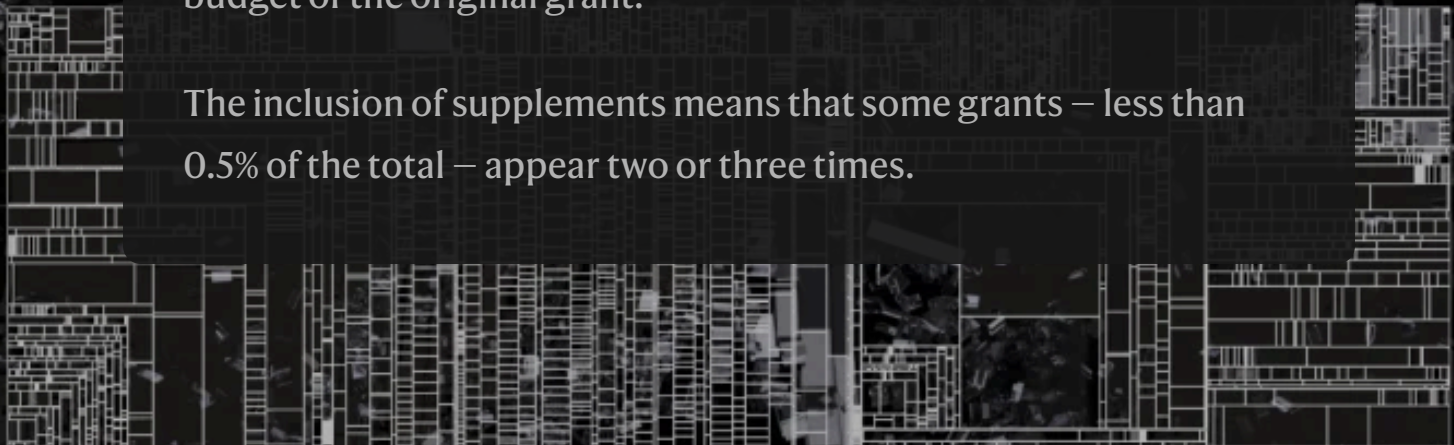
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Over the course of 2025, more than 7,800 grants were cancelled or suspended. In this tree map, each block represents one grant or grant supplement, and the size of the block corresponds to the total budget of the original grant.

The inclusion of supplements means that some grants – less than 0.5% of the total – appear two or three times.

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The blocks are grouped by state. New York (orange) had the most cancelled or frozen grants, totalling nearly 1,500. The majority were at Columbia University.

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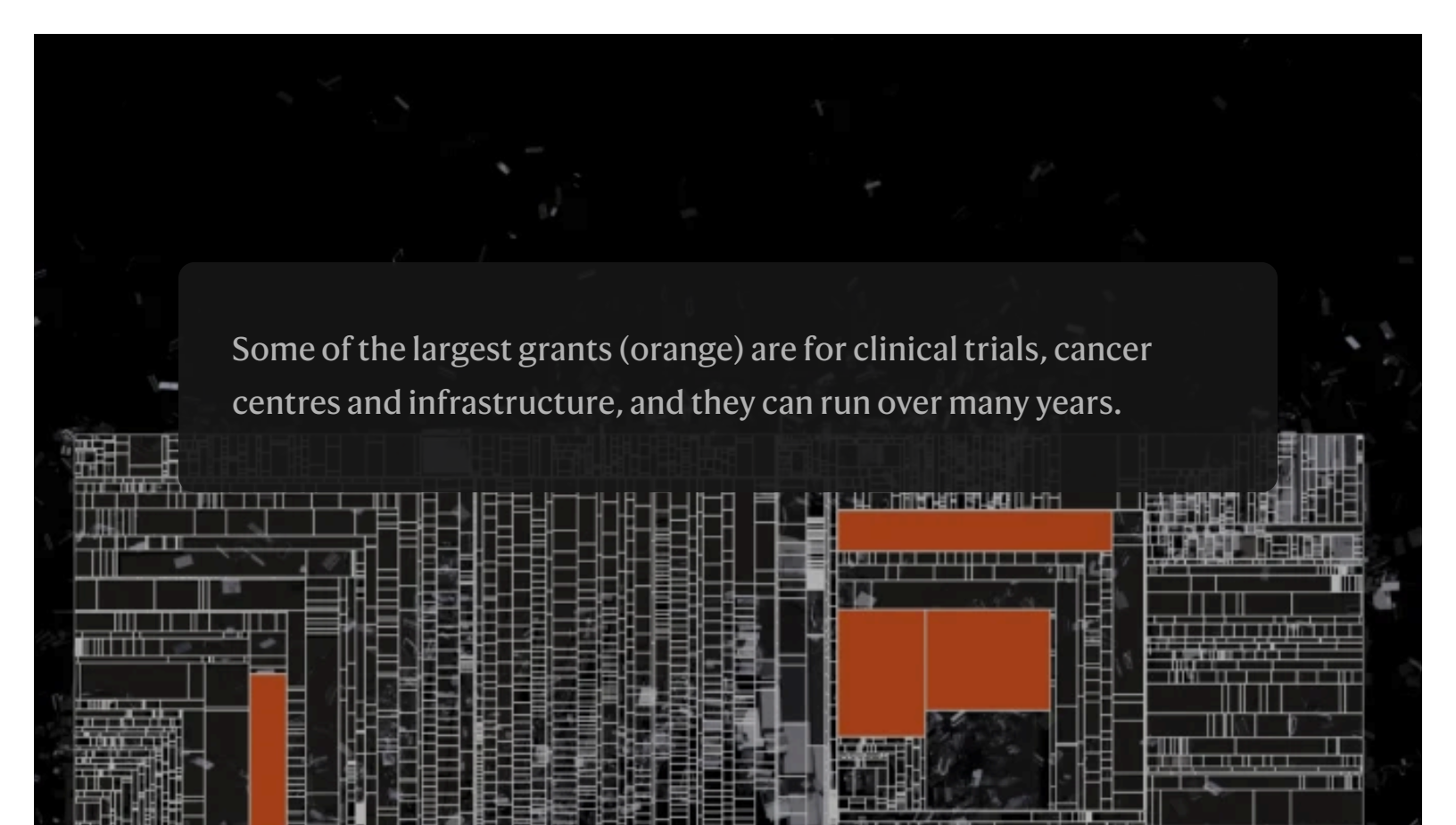
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Some of the largest grants (orange) are for clinical trials, cancer centres and infrastructure, and they can run over many years.

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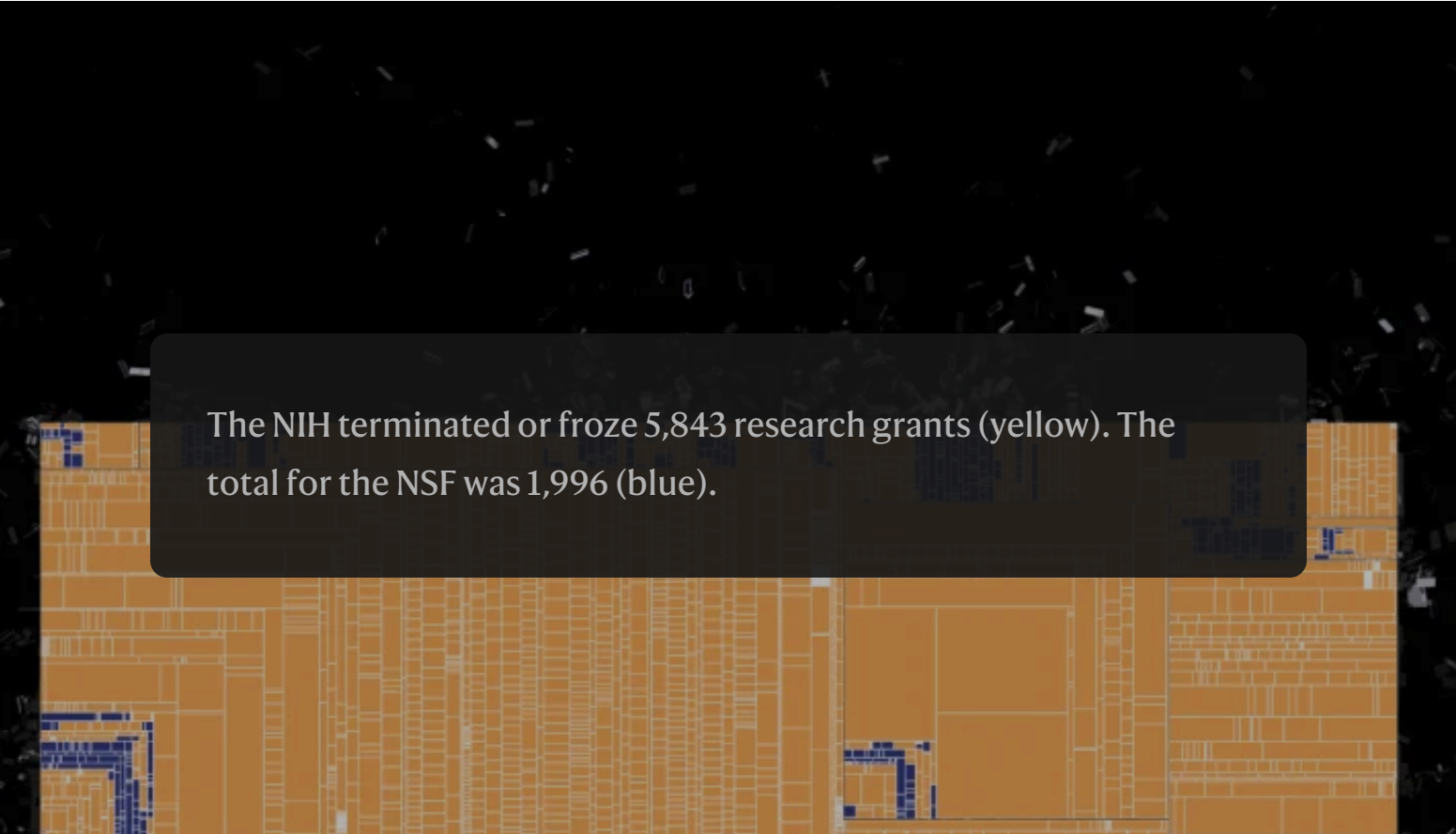
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The NIH terminated or froze 5,843 research grants (yellow). The total for the NSF was 1,996 (blue).

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Of the grants that were terminated or frozen, more than 800 were related to infectious diseases (orange).

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Courts have ordered that thousands of grants be reinstated, and some universities have settled with the government to unfreeze funding (both reinstated and unfrozen grants are shown in blue). But it is unclear how many scientists have received those funds.

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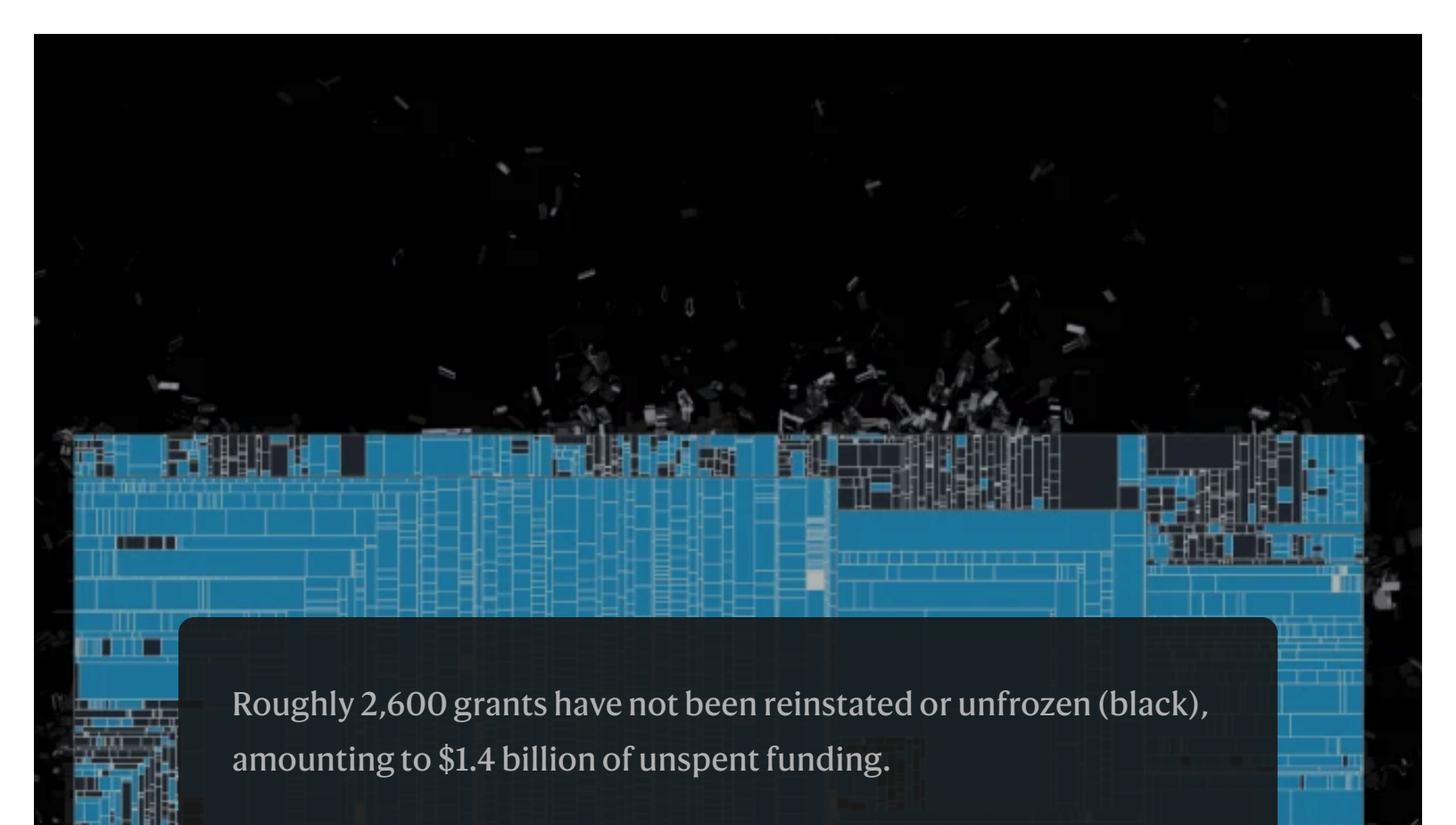
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Roughly 2,600 grants have not been reinstated or unfrozen (black), amounting to \$1.4 billion of unspent funding.

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# Grant reductions

The Trump administration has substantially reduced the number of new grants issued by the NSF and the NIH, which means that fewer researchers are getting support.

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In 2025, the total number of new grants funded by the NSF dropped by 25% relative to the average of the previous ten years. In part, this resulted from uncertainty about future funding, and the agency's decision to provide multi-year funding – in which a project's budget is awarded all at once, rather than year by year.

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A similar story played out at the NIH, which issued 24% fewer grants in 2025, compared with the average of the previous ten years. After delays early in the year and with reduced staff levels, the agency raced to award grants by the end of the fiscal year. It achieved this in part by providing multi-year funding to a smaller number of new grant applications than usual – sharply reducing the number of scientists that received support.

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# Squeezing the pipeline for new scientists

During the 2025–26 academic year, new international-student enrolment at US universities fell markedly. The Institute of International Education (IIE), a non-profit organization in New York City, released preliminary data, based on a subset of universities, showing a 17% decline from 2024 to 2025. This would result in the smallest number of new international enrolments in a decade, except for in 2020–21, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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These trends are not uniform. An IIE survey found that about 60% of colleges and universities saw decreases, whereas 40% reported stable or increasing numbers. Of those experiencing declines, 96% cited visa-application concerns as a contributing factor. These concerns have intensified under the second Trump administration.

## Gutting government science agencies

In total, federal science agencies lost about 20% of their staff in 2025 relative to the previous year, after modest increases over the past few years.

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# The fight over funding cuts

In its proposed budget for the 2026 fiscal year, the [Trump administration requested historic cuts](#) of 35% to the budget for research and development not related to defence. The final funding levels will be determined through spending bills passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate in an ongoing process.

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But in enacted spending bills, lawmakers in both the Senate and the House of Representatives have so far rejected the most drastic budget cuts for many of the core science agencies. Policy experts hope that Congress will continue its long-standing support for science agencies when it finalizes the 2026 budget in the coming weeks.

The Trump administration shocked the science community when it proposed slashing more than \$18 billion, or around 40% of the total, from the budget of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which is the largest funder of biomedical research in the world.

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The House and the Senate must finish negotiating final budgets for the remaining agencies, such as the NIH, and the actual funding levels will probably be somewhere in the middle. That would mostly protect the country's total budget for research and development from the Trump administration's drastic cuts for the current fiscal year.

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- **Max Kozlov** writes for Nature from Washington DC
- **Jeff Tollefson** writes for Nature from New York City
- **Dan Garisto** is a science journalist in Syracuse, New York
- **Kim Albrecht** is a professor at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen, Germany, and a principal at metal AB at Harvard and

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# Sources

- **Cancelled grants:** [Grant Witness](#).
- **Grant reductions:** NSF grant information from [NSF Award Search](#). NIH grant data from [NIH RePORTER](#).
- **Squeezing the pipeline for new scientists:** Data from the [Institute of International Education](#). The number of new international students for the 2025–26 academic year was extrapolated from the institute’s autumn snapshot, which surveyed a smaller number of schools than other years.
- **Gutting government science agencies:** Historical workforce numbers at scientific agencies were taken from the [Office of Personnel and Management](#); numbers for 2025 were obtained from agency responses to *Nature’s* query or from shutdown plans

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