

program. France is a member of the US visa waiver program, and there have been no disruptions to visa access this year, says Rossi.

## International collaboration

This isn't the first accelerator held in Houston for international space companies. Six Italian startups visited the city for five weeks in 2023. The Space Foundation, a nonprofit advocacy organization for the space industry, partnered with the Italian Trade Agency and the Italian Space Agency to organize the program. One company that participated, Involve Space, has since expanded to the Houston area. It conducted its first stratospheric balloon launch in January.

Kelli Kedis Ogborn, the Space Foundation's vice president of space commerce and entrepreneurship, says the nonprofit organizations and universities that set up the programs are key players. The organizations have access to high-quality, credible information about technology and policy, and they can act as a neutral third party connecting commercial players.

Alexander doesn't see the program as a threat to US businesses. A US-based company offering better or cheaper tech-



**A SMALL SATELLITE PROPULSION SYSTEM** orbits above Earth in this illustration from Agena Space, a French company that is developing nontoxic liquid propellants. (Image from Agena Space.)

nology will still outcompete a foreign competitor, he says. He hopes that the initiative will “bring in a different set of ideas.” Rice’s second accelerator class will arrive in the fall, with funding being renewed annually for the next three years.

US startups could one day travel to France through a reciprocal program to

pitch European space industries, says Hugues Mbezal Bogam, the Rice Space Institute’s space liaison with France. “We strongly see that having a more diverse and more dynamic industry will foster the development of the commercial space market,” he says.

**Jenessa Duncombe**

# A crowdsourced database tracks US science grant cancellations

Increasing transparency and informing advocacy and litigation efforts are the main goals of the online resource, which monitors the status of funds awarded by NSF and NIH.

**I**n the spring, NSF began canceling some previously awarded grants. The cuts targeted research in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives; environmental justice; and misinformation. Separately, the Trump administration froze federal funding at several large US research universities. Court challenges and settlements have since reinstated some grants, which has led to an evolving patchwork of federal science cuts. The cancellations and reinstatements can now be seen in one place with the online tracker Grant Witness.

Noam Ross, a computational researcher and executive director at the nonprofit rOpenSci, and Scott Delaney, a Harvard University social and environ-

mental epidemiologist, launched the tracker in March to track National Institutes of Health grant cancellations. NIH had posted conflicting information about the extent of the cuts, says Ross, so he and Delaney started collecting a list of grants through submissions from affected principal investigators, court filings, and official lists when available. The two researchers vetted submissions by comparing them with publicly available federal award identification numbers and the government’s spending database tool, USAspending.gov. The tracker was originally called Grant Watch, but the pair renamed it Grant Witness in July for trademark reasons.

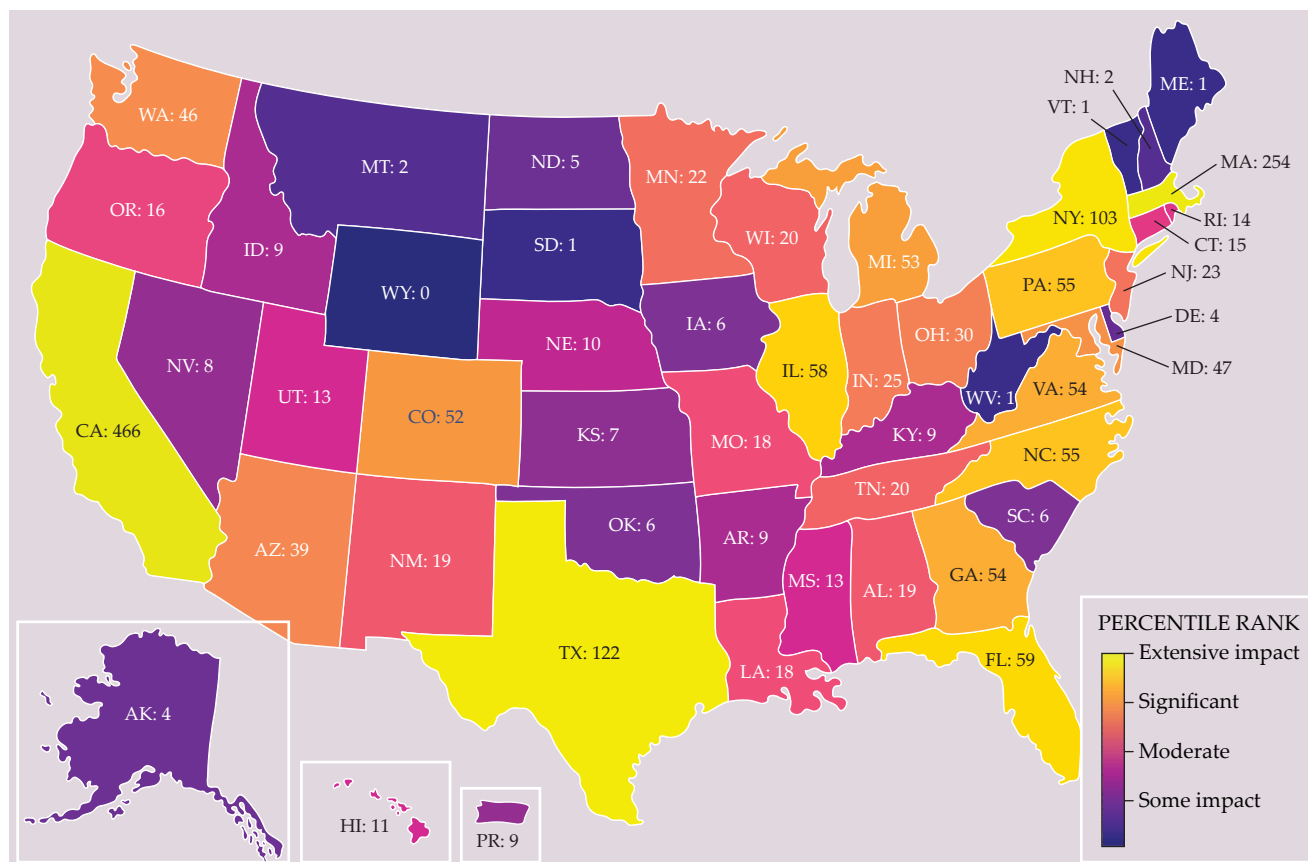
Grant Witness began tracking NSF

grants in April when the agency announced the first round of cuts. A small group of organizers helps Ross and Delaney regularly update the lists to reflect new cancellations or reinstatements. Ross has spent about \$100 out of pocket to host the website, and the group received a small grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to fund one person for a few hours a week. All other organizers volunteer their time. Ross says the group is seeking more funding to support the work.

The cuts hit home for the Grant Witness team in May: Delaney’s grants were terminated when the administration canceled all NIH funding to Harvard. Delaney says he expects to lose his job at Harvard as a result.

## Grant cancellations by the numbers

As of 29 August, the database lists 1552 canceled NSF grants across all disciplines. In many cases, awardees have already received a portion of their funding. The cumulative remaining value of the canceled grants is about \$860 million, according to Grant Witness.



**A MAP OF NSF GRANT IMPACTS** by state, created from Grant Witness data, reveals the hot spots nationwide as of 29 August. The numbers and colors indicate the total number of grants impacted, including canceled and possibly reinstated grants. (Image courtesy of Grant Witness.)

Another 417 NSF grants are labeled in the database as “possibly reinstated.” Those funds have been restored by successful appeals, university settlements with the federal government, or court orders, such as the preliminary injunction in June that temporarily restored terminated grants for diversity, equity, and inclusion research across the University of California system. Grant Witness does not label a grant “fully reinstated” until organizers receive proof from principal investigators or through USAspending.gov of returned money flow, says Ross. “Frankly, we don’t believe it until we see it,” he says.

Physics and astronomy divisions in NSF’s Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS) have been affected by the cuts. Twenty-nine grants were canceled and 17 marked as “possibly reinstated” as of 29 August. Among those canceled are an astrophysics education program for American Indian and Alaska Native scientists at the University

of Minnesota Twin Cities and an initiative to mentor and train new physical scientists across nine universities.

Twenty of the canceled grants supported physics and astronomy studies at Harvard, including research on supernovae, quantum nanophotonics systems, and miniaturized chemical computing devices. Sixteen physics and astronomy grants at the University of California, Los Angeles, were marked as “possibly reinstated” in August after a federal judge ordered the administration to unfreeze the school’s nearly 800 affected science grants. (The Justice Department froze the grants in July after alleging that the university violated antidiscrimination statutes.)

Compared with other divisions in the MPS, the cuts to physics and astronomy are on par with those to chemistry, which has had 31 total grants affected, and materials research, at 26, but they are smaller than the cuts to mathematical sciences at 88. The MPS’s total of

196 pales in comparison with the 805 grants affected in the Directorate for STEM Education.

## Information as power

Other trackers have cropped up too. Users can browse federal layoffs, terminations to contracts and leases, hiring freezes, and other cuts on the Impact Map, an initiative by the private company Public Service Ventures. International student visa revocations were tracked in April by the publication *Inside Higher Ed*, and a list of federal actions to scale back climate regulations is updated regularly by Columbia Law School. Unbreaking, a volunteer-run project affiliated with the nonprofit Raft Foundation, hosts a tracker of trackers.

Providing accessible and transparent data for public advocacy and litigation is the main goal of Grant Witness, says Ross. The tracker has been used in evidence in five lawsuits and to prep speakers for congressional testimony. Ross says Grant Witness served as the inspiration for a campaign to publish op-eds in every state to highlight the impacts of cuts on local communities.

**Jenessa Duncombe**