



SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIAL VALUES LAB

Public Science

CALL FOR PAPERS

Special Issue of The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science The Public's Science—A New Social Contract for American Research Policy

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Abstract Deadline: Friday, September 19, 2025

Seventy-five years after Vannevar Bush's *Science—The Endless Frontier* established the foundational social contract for publicly funded research in the United States, we face an unprecedented crisis in American research policy. The original arrangement of government funding in exchange for research autonomy, with the expectation of broad societal benefits, has produced remarkable scientific achievements and world-shaping technologies, from life-saving medicines to weapons of mass destruction. Yet this arrangement has consistently lacked robust mechanisms for genuine public accountability, a weakness now exposed as publicly funded institutions face systematic attacks and declining public trust.

Today, in the midst of these attacks, this contract is unraveling. Publicly funded institutions—from federal research and funding agencies, such as the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health, to colleges and universities—face efforts at their systematic dismantling, against the backdrop of anti-science and anti-government sentiment. For this special issue, **The Public's Science: A New Social Contract for American Research Policy**, we seek papers that develop scholarship and policy insights to advance a new social contract for American research policy—one that promotes public science. By this we mean a research ecosystem oriented toward excellence, justice, transparency, and democratic participation that serves not only the nation's interests but also the diverse publics who sustain and are affected by the scientific enterprise.

Contributors are asked to step back from the current moment to ask how we got here, and how to re-orient so as to realize a public-spirited vision of research and innovation. Contributors should critically assess the historical and political context of the writing of Bush's *Science—The Endless Frontier*, exploring both the continued relevance and the limitations of its foundational assumptions. How did we arrive at this moment of crisis? What alternative visions were sidelined in the original debates? And how might we chart a new course for research and development that is genuinely publicly accountable, not merely publicly funded?

Possible Topics

- **Historical Reckonings and Alternative Futures:** Examining alternative visions of science policy. What can we learn from the roads not taken?
- **Democratic Participation and Accountability:** Analyzing mechanisms for genuine public engagement in research priority-setting, from citizen science movements to community-based participatory research models.
- **Global and Comparative Perspectives:** Learning from international approaches to research governance and from communities that have long faced restrictions on intellectual freedom.
- **Research Infrastructure and Institutional Innovation:** Exploring new governance structures, funding mechanisms, and evaluation systems that could enable more democratic and equitable research ecosystems.
- **Policy Coalitions and Alliances:** Examining what intellectual and political alliances are needed to advance research policy reform, including the roles of communities and scholars in building effective coalitions.
- **Justice and Ethics:** Expanding concepts of research ethics beyond individual protections to encompass broader questions of distributive justice and democratic participation in science policy.

Submissions

We welcome a range of contributions (e.g., empirical, theoretical, case studies) from scholars in sociology, history of science, intellectual history, policy studies, science and technology studies, as well as researchers in civil society organizations. Please submit 500-word abstracts by **Friday, September 19, 2025** to info@publicscience.net.

Process and Timeline

Accepted contributors will be notified by **Monday, October 6, 2025**. Selected contributors will participate in a two-day workshop at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, December 4–6, 2025. Participants will present 2,500-word papers that will be developed into 5,000-word articles for publication in *The ANNALS*. All travel costs will be covered for selected participants.

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