



May 28, 2025

RE: Public Comment in Response to Improving Performance, Accountability and Responsiveness in the Civil Service [Docket No. OPM-2025-0004]

To Whom It May Concern:

We object strenuously to the plan to replace thousands of civil service positions with Schedule F positions throughout science agencies.

This plan would politicize scientific funding decisions, diminish institutional knowledge, and exchange scientifically based decision making with political choices. The outcome would be a disastrous incursion into the integrity of the science funding process and consequently, the quality standards that have long guided grant-making decisions.

The positions threatened with conversion to Schedule F positions involve writing funding opportunity announcements for emerging areas of science, identifying highly qualified external reviewers for scientific proposals, evaluating the scientific merit of grant applications, and proposing a balanced and innovative portfolio of research to fund in a particular field of science.

This role is currently filled through a competitive hiring process seeking out top-notch scientists with excellent judgment about the scientific merit and study design of a proposed set of experiments. Converting these important positions to political appointees would open the positions to ideologically based decision-making and make scientific staff vulnerable to political pressure. This, in turn, would make the positions less attractive to first rate scientists, would shorten the average tenure, and would reduce institutional knowledge.

The American innovation ecosystem requires that program managers at our federal science agencies be highly qualified scientists who spend their time designing and executing programs to fund outstanding scientific research.

We oppose this change and strongly support non-political positions as the backbone of the US science agencies and a key reason for America's highly successful history of innovation.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Hallett
Executive Director

Jo Handelsman, PhD
Board Chair