



AAUW Comment Guide: U.S. Department of Education Grants Proposal Speak Out by September 23, 2026

A new proposal from the U.S. Department of Education would make major changes to how the agency awards and manages grants to state education departments, public school districts, nonprofits, community organizations, and more.

This proposal is the administration's latest attempt to advance its political agenda through exerting control over what federal funds are used for, who receives them, and how grant recipients must act. If finalized, the proposal would give Department of Education officials broad authority to cancel grants they decide do not align with the administration's political priorities. That puts critical student supports and work advancing equity at risk.

Comments opposing this rule are due by September 23, 2026, at 11:59 pm ET.

[Click here to submit your comment now.](#)

How the Department of Education Awards Grants

The U.S. Department of Education awards and administers competitive and formula grants to fulfill its mission of promoting student achievement, fostering educational excellence, and ensuring equal access.

Competitive grants are discretionary grants made on a merit-based process, and their availability depends on funds appropriated by Congress. Formula grants are non-competitive and automatically distributed to state or local governments based on a predetermined, legislated formula informed by data such as population, poverty levels, and other characteristics.

Some examples of competitive and formula grants include grants that provide technical assistance and support for students in rural and isolated areas; provide state and local educational agencies with relief funds when impacted by natural disasters, health emergencies, and other rapid-response events; improve teacher preparation and attract and retain prospective teachers; and support students with special needs such as those who are economically disadvantaged, have disabilities, or are transitioning out of gangs.

How We Got Here

Since January 2025, the Trump administration has taken major executive actions to delay, freeze, or eliminate federal grants — impacting education, research, childcare, public



health and safety, and more. Advocacy groups have successfully challenged many of these actions in court.

In August 2026, the U.S. Department of Education released a proposed rule that seeks to make significant changes to the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), the set of rules governing how the agency awards and administers grants.

The proposed changes build on the Office of Management and Budget's May 2026 proposal, which would affect all federal grantmaking, drew significant public backlash, and has not yet taken effect.

What the Department of Education is Proposing

The proposed rule would:

- Change grant criteria to favor the administration's political priorities.
- Give Department of Education officials broad authority to reduce or cut off funding, including multiyear grants in progress, "for convenience."
- Weaken the mechanisms that grantees can use to hold the Department accountable, including some legal avenues to challenge grant terminations in court.
- Create vague standards for how grantees must make hiring, admissions, and compensation decisions.
- Undermine transparency by ending the requirement for the Department to publish grant opportunities in the publicly available Federal Register.
- Require grantees to comply with all executive orders, including those that seek to ban diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and "gender ideology." As executive orders do not hold the power of the law and can sometimes violate federal law or the Constitution, this creates confusion, risk, and uncertainty for grant recipients.

What's At Stake

- **Funding decisions could be based on a political agenda, not public benefit.** Department of Education officials would have more power to end grants they disfavor or decide don't align with the administration's priorities.
- **Disruptions to funding could threaten access to critical programs.** A delay, reduction, or termination of federal funding could force schools to shut down essential services like student mental health support and teacher training.



- **Forced compliance with executive orders could put equity work at risk.** All grantees would be held to policy preferences that could conflict with goals to advance equity or equal opportunity — causing confusion and a chilling effect.
- **Weakened accountability could leave students and communities more vulnerable.** Cutting off legal pathways for grantees to challenge funding termination could leave schools, community organizations, and the people they serve without recourse.

What You Can Do

1. **Submit a personalized comment by September 23, 2026.** Personalize your comment so it is considered individually and requires a response from the Department. Comments that are too similar may be dismissed.
 - a. If you work/have worked at a nonprofit or school, share how these proposed changes would affect your job and the people you serve.
 - b. If you're a community member, talk about how local nonprofits have helped you and your family or how they've benefitted those around you — and the consequences if those services go away.

[Click here to submit your comment through AAUW's action page.](#) This is a public comment that will be published with your name. To submit a comment anonymously, [visit regulations.gov](#).

2. **Spread the word.** Share this guide with colleagues, community partners, and local nonprofits.
3. **Affirm our values.** AAUW has worked for more than 140 years to remove barriers to women's access and success in education. This proposal threatens the programs and practices that help ensure women, and all students, have equal opportunity.

AAUW does not receive federal funding and would not be subject to this rule. But when the federal funding environment punishes equity-focused work, the ripple effects hit our grantees, our fellows, and the communities our members serve. That's why we're encouraging every AAUW member and advocate to make their voice heard.

Stand with AAUW. Speak out. Submit your comment by September 23, 2026.

Have questions or need help? Reach out to advocacy@aauw.org.