

**NIH Biosafety Modernization Initiative Engagement Summary  
American Society for Microbiology “Meet the Policymaker” Webinar  
December 15, 2025**

**Background**

NIH announced its Biosafety Modernization Initiative in Fall 2025 and began an expansive plan for engaging stakeholders. In addition to holding six regional listening sessions, NIH also participated in smaller engagements to gather individual input to help inform a new NIH biosafety policy.

The American Society for Microbiology (ASM), a professional life science organization aimed at promoting and advancing microbial sciences around the world, hosted a webinar for its members and invited the NIH to speak about the NIH Biosafety Modernization Initiative, and the role microbiologists can play in helping shape a new biosafety policy.

**Event Summary**

NIH presented an introduction to the Biosafety Modernization Initiative and framed the topics that would be helpful to inform the policy framework. The discussion topics presented by NIH included:

- Proposed expansion of scope to include more than recombinant and/or synthetic nucleic acid molecules.
- Potential tiering of experiments based on risk.
- Types of research that might require less oversight based on accrued safety data or existing oversight from another Federal agency.

ASM members provided individual feedback, including some of the following comments and input:

- The importance of coordinating with NIH’s Federal partners to close perceived gaps and ensure the new biosafety policy does not create gaps.
- The need to calibrate oversight with potential risk.
- The need for consistency in the role of IBCs, IACUCs, and IRBs.
- Flexibility in risk group classifications based on the genetic changes of potential pathogens.

NIH thanked individuals for their comments and encouraged ASM members to continue providing feedback through the mechanisms listed on the NIH Office of Science Policy website.