



NIH Biosafety Modernization Initiative Engagement Summary
Iowa State University Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC)
February 9, 2026

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.

NIH met with the Iowa State IBC, which oversees research on large agricultural animals.

Event Summary

Iowa State IBC members provided an overview of the current review practices for research subject to the current NIH Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant or Synthetic Nucleic Acid Molecules as well as for research that is being conducted under a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) permit.

Attendees provided individual feedback on several topics, including some of the following comments and input:

- Expanding the scope to include wild-type organisms is appropriate from a risk-based perspective. At Iowa State, this is accomplished through a separate committee.
- The burden of reviewing low risk research could be eased by allowing for expedited review where a biosafety officer or subset of the IBC can approve on behalf of the full committee.
- While not posing a human health risk, plant pathogens potentially could pose an economic risk and environmental risk that may require IBCs to mitigate.
- The new policy could benefit from providing information on chemical safety hazards.
- An appropriate implementation period for the new policy would be helpful to institutions.

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