Open Access After the Transformation
The Funder Perspective

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

www.openaccess.gatesfoundation.org
The Transformation
Hasn’t Happened Yet
But We Can Get There
A Decade of BMGF Open Access Policy 2015 - 2025

Accomplishments

- Leading, bold policy prioritizing open sharing of funded research
- Inspired & coordinated with similar initiatives: OSTP, cOAlition S, ORFG
- Gates Open Research successfully introduced publish-review-curate model
- OA has become the industry norm and every journal offers an open option
- Policy compliance has risen from 2% in 2015 to 85% in 2022

Available resources

- Updated policy language
- Updated policy FAQ
- Journal Checker Tool, released by cOAlition S
- Rights Retention Strategy explained
- SharePoint Website materials updated for foundation staff
- One-pager Grantee Guide and Repository Guide

Communication & outreach

- cOAlition S aligned comms
- Foundation-wide comms to staff, materials on SharePoint
- Grantee Guide and Repository Guide published
- Increased publisher interaction about workflow and practice
- Publication & compliance reporting via OA.Works

Lessons Learned

- OA policies cannot bear the burden of solving all the inequities & issues existing in the research ecosystem (such as funding research, incentives, cost).
- OA compliance had risen steadily but has flattened. Publishers are slow to change and have pushed back when revenue is threatened.
- Publish-review-curate is the cornerstone for preprints but penetration as an alternative to traditional journals is slow and would benefit from new curation models for trust and verification.
- Article compliance is high, but open data availability lags.
- Alliances with similar funders accelerate change.
BMGF publication and OA compliance are holding steady with a slight rise, yet the number of OA articles needing payment from the Central Fund is on the decline.

Even though the number of OA articles requesting BMGF funding is going down, the annual cost of publishing is going up.

Lessons Learned

- OA publishing has its own momentum with a greater number of mandates from funders and institutions. Grantee OA publications are increasingly paid for by institutions. Publishing costs continue to climb.
- APCs are the predominate business model and new models are slow to grow and gain adopters. Community agreement that APCs are inequitable, & costs range up to $12,000/article.
- Managing a central fund gives an institution insight into spend but hides the cost to authors
- Most publishers are not set up for funder payments; managing payments is an administrative burden
- We know there is a cost to publishing but we do not want to support OA at any & all costs
Open Access Business Models & Experimentation

Compatible Models
• First iteration of the OA Policy was very focused on paid OA – if there wasn’t a paid option the journal wasn’t compliant
• With cOAlition S more routes to compliance were considered
  • Emphasis on Rights Retention Strategy & Green OA
  • Transformative Journal Program
  • Transformative Agreements have not been supported

Lessons Learned
• Models take time to develop & it’s hard to know what will be most successful
• At some point a stance on commercial models will need to be taken
• Often at journal the editorial & business operations are siloed. This should change
• Grantee authors see the value in open access to their research
• Education & awareness of open access & current publishing pain points is still needed
• Still struggle with understanding the true cost of publishing & trust with commercial publishers is low

Price Transparency
• Participated in the cOAlition S Price Transparency work – known as the Journal Comparison Service
• Little uptake & many concessions were made by the funders
• Anti-competitive law continues to be a barrier

Exploring other models
• Supported Subscribe 2 Open via IWA
• Following Diamond model community
• Exploring other models with open aligned non-profit publishers
Looking Forward

Foundation policy has affected real change in Open Access

- A decade of Open Access (OA) policy has established open publishing as an option for every grantee with OA workflows at all publishers

Open Access is a movement, not just a funder requirement

- OA has its own momentum from the ecosystem
- Most funders have adopted immediate OA and formed coalitions, notably OSTP and NIH

Policy targets have been reached but more needs to be done

- Policy compliance has grown from 2% to 85%
- Predominant business model charges per article and many authors cannot pay without support
- Open data compliance lags behind

2025 policy addresses issues of equity, inclusion, and rigor

- Require preprints for all funded research outputs
- Encourage preprint review and curation
- Change reimbursement model for publishing fees
- Amplify open data requirement

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