

NICHD Strategic Planning: Background and Context

Introduction

For more than 50 years, the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) has supported and conducted research on the processes of human development and how they affect health, from preconception through adulthood. NICHD's research has saved lives, prevented disabilities, and improved quality of life for many Americans. The NICHD portfolio encompasses research on areas as diverse as cellular biology; fetal, infant, and child growth and development; learning and intellectual and developmental disabilities; early education; infectious diseases; contraception; gynecology; male and female infertility; pregnancy; population sciences, biotechnology; behavioral and social sciences; injury and trauma; medical rehabilitation; pediatric and obstetric pharmacology; and many others. Today, new challenges and opportunities are emerging rapidly, and the institute must examine approaches to advancing the science in its broad mandate.

In January 2018, NICHD initiated a data-driven process to develop a new strategic plan and guide the institute's activities for the next several years. This included a review of NICHD's research portfolio across its intramural and extramural programs and of the impact of the science supported by NICHD. Portions of these preliminary analyses are summarized here to provide contextual information to inform the deliberations of the NICHD Strategic Planning Working Group.

Background

NICHD is the ninth largest of the 27 Institutes and Centers (ICs) that constitute the National Institutes of Health (NIH), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Most of NICHD's research dollars are distributed through the extramural program¹ to academic and other research institutions. NICHD also supports a vibrant intramural program² of research on the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland, and at other facilities. Table 1 uses data from fiscal year 2017 to provide an overview on the type and extent of support NICHD provides to the extramural and intramural community.

NICHD's Division of Extramural Research (DER) coordinates and funds research and training programs across the United States and internationally through grants and contracts. DER is comprised of 12 extramural branches, covering wide-ranging topics including developmental biology, contraception, intellectual disabilities, pediatric trauma, pregnancy, and population

¹ The Extramural Research Program funds research and training opportunities at universities, medical centers, and other institutions throughout the United States and abroad through research grants, career development awards, and other mechanisms.

² The Intramural Research Program supports the research projects that are conducted on the NIH campus or other satellite laboratories by scientists who are employed by the Federal government.

Summary

NICHD has a wide-ranging portfolio that broadly covers the far-reaching mission of the institute and incorporates, in substantial proportions, the breadth of scientific methods and domains. The impact of NICHD research is difficult to assess precisely, especially given the broad range topics and methods covered by the institute. However, publication analyses and citations of NICHD research in guidelines indicate that the institute's research is broadly published and disseminated. With guidance from scientific experts, the NICHD Advisory Council, and NICHD staff, the institute's task will be to further focus its efforts to advance its mission through the strategic planning process.