

Lewis-Burke Associates LLC

National Institutes of Health

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the nation's largest medical research agency. Its mission is "to seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and to apply that knowledge to enhance human health, lengthen life, and reduce the burdens of illness and disabilityⁱ." NIH is composed of 27 different Institutes and Centers (ICs), each specializing in its own area of diseases or body systems research. The Office of the Director is responsible for overall agency policies and facilitates management and coordination across all IC activities. While NIH has maintained its strong tradition of supporting basic biomedical research, in recent years the agency has brought increased attention to the importance of translational research in an effort to speed the delivery of new drugs and treatments to patients.

Research Scope & Objectives

NIH supports a broad range of basic, translational, and clinical biological research to acquire new knowledge that can help improve human health. NIH sponsors a large amount of extramural research by scientists at academic institutions across the country, provides training opportunities to foster the next generation of researchers, and conducts a small amount of research in its own intramural laboratories.

Degree of Engagement



NIH accomplishes its mission primarily through sponsorship of extramural research; more than 80 percent of the NIH budget is awarded through about 50,000 competitive research and training grants to more than 300,000 researchers at more than 2,600 universities, medical schools, and other research institutions in all 50 states.ⁱⁱ Many of these grants fund health-related research by individual investigators through the "R01" research project grant. The R01, NIH's oldest funding mechanism, can support either investigator-initiated research proposals or proposals submitted in response to a program announcement or request for application.ⁱⁱⁱ NIH also awards program project and center grants to support multidisciplinary, joint research efforts that share common research disciplines, facilities, and resources. Securing program project grants, large center grants, and cooperative agreements ("P" and "U" awards) can help universities bolster the profile of their biomedical research programs within the NIH community (e.g. NCI-Designated Cancer Center Program).

Signature Programs

Several of NIH's signature programs fund the establishment of research centers at academic institutions:

- **Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) Program** – Started in 2006, the CTSA program supports a national consortium of medical research institutions throughout the country to accelerate the translation of laboratory discoveries into treatments for patients, while also increasing community involvement in clinical research efforts and training a new cohort of clinical and translational investigators. Although the CTSA Consortium reached its anticipated size of 60 medical research institutions in 2011, a recently released CTSA Request for Applications did not specify a fixed limit to the total number of consortia participants, apparently leaving open the possibility of new CTSA sites. The CTSA program is funded by NIH's newly created National Center for

Advancing Translational Sciences. *More information:*
<http://www.ncats.nih.gov/research/cts/ctsa/ctsa.html>.

- **Institutional Development Award (IDeA) Program** – The IDeA program fosters health-related research at institutions located in states with historically low NIH application success rates (“IDeA states”). It also increases the competitiveness of investigators at IDeA state institutions by supporting faculty development and research infrastructure improvements. Administered by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), the program’s two main initiatives are the Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence and the IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence. Additionally, the **IDeA Program Infrastructure for Clinical and Translational Research** initiative encourages IDeA states to develop the resources necessary to conduct clinical and translational research on diseases that affect underserved populations and diseases prevalent in IDeA states. *More information:*
<http://www.nigms.nih.gov/Training/IDeA/>.
- **National Cancer Institute (NCI)-Designated Cancer Centers Program** – The NCI-Designated Cancer Centers Program recognizes research centers that meet strict criteria for outstanding programs in cancer research. Institutions must spend several years developing quality cancer research facilities, programs, and researchers in order to successfully complete the rigorous application and review process. Therefore, the designation not only provides institutions with access to federal funding and national resources, it is also a prestigious distinction signifying scientific excellence and leadership. Most of the 67 NCI-designated centers are affiliated with university medical centers. *More information:*
<http://www.cancer.gov/researchandfunding/extramural/cancercenters/about>.

NIH also provides grants for predoctoral and postdoctoral training:

- **Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Institutional Research Training Grants** – NRSA Institutional Research Training Grants are awarded to institutions as the primary means of supporting predoctoral and postdoctoral research training to develop a diverse and skilled biomedical research workforce. In addition to institutional training awards, NRSA fellowships are also available to individual trainees. *More information:* <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-11-184.html>.

Additional Resources

NIH Website: <http://www.nih.gov/>
Office of Extramural Research Funding Opportunities: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm>
NIH Organization: <http://www.nih.gov/about/almanac/organization/index.htm>
Strategic Plans: <http://report.nih.gov/strategicplans/index.aspx>
Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools (RePORT): <http://report.nih.gov/>

ⁱ <http://www.nih.gov/about/mission.htm>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.nih.gov/about/impact/testimony-6-21-2012.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/r01.htm>