

National Institute on Aging

Workforce Planning and Restructuring: FY 2002 and FY 2003

NIA workforce planning proceeds from the assumption that all decisions are intimately linked to the NIA strategic plan. In collaboration with the National Advisory Council on Aging and other public and private organizations, the NIA has developed a strategic plan for aging research to identify goals for the next 5 years. These goals address scientific areas that hold the greatest promise for advancing knowledge. The scientific progress documented in our input to the NIH Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) submission also indicates our commitment to tie human resources management to the goals of the strategic plan. Key to accomplishing these goals is the ability to recruit and retain talented professionals in all mission areas, both intramural and extramural.

The NIA Intramural Research Program (IRP) has been aggressively restructuring research and support activities since FY 1995. The IRP has improved quality and program management by implementing key recommendations made by its Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC) and by re-prioritizing research to capitalize upon emerging scientific opportunities. Restructuring of scientific programs is well underway, including four critical research priorities: neurosciences, genetics, translational clinical research and minority health and health disparities research. These research activities are among the most promising scientific areas and each is integral to addressing aging and age-associated diseases in the American population. The BSC has strongly endorsed the NIA's Scientific Director's initiatives and the recruitment of key investigators. The IRP also maintains an effective program to train the next generation of scientists, including Postdoctoral fellows from other nations.

Translational research is expected to expand rapidly with the expected opening of a new clinical research unit in FY 2002. Additional staffing is required to enable full staffing of the Office of the Clinical Director. This staffing is essential for the coordination and management of clinical research protocols in a robust clinical research program. Cost-effective use will be made of contract services, including the hiring of clinical staff, research nurses and support staff. The IRP will effectively utilize staff or technical and research support services related to bioinformatics and data management. Bioinformatics is a critical area that may require additional incentives to recruit and retain highly qualified staff.

The IRP has utilized competition to contract for animal care, safety, graphics, security, housekeeping, and facilities and grounds maintenance services. Reliance upon contract performance is being strengthened by use of performance-based contracting. In addition, the IRP administrative staff is collaborating with other ICs in a planning effort to assess potential efficiencies that could accrue from increased delegation of authority and initiatives to streamline processes. This effort would seek to overcome barriers and, thereby, improve operations, reduce the time it takes to make decisions and the time it takes to fill vacancies.

Although most NIA staffing is related to our intramural research program, extramural activities account for the great majority (>85%) of NIA spending. Staff dedicated to extramural scientific activities are therefore a critical portion of the NIA workforce management plan.

Extramural scientists play a key role in developing and executing the Alzheimer's Disease Prevention Initiative (ADPI), which is greatly expanding its program. NIA will dedicate significant program funds to search for new ways to prevent and treat Alzheimer's disease (AD), with a special emphasis on testing interventions aimed at preventing the disease. Such efforts will require clinical trials on a scale never before attempted by the NIA, necessitating the creation of an oversight infrastructure of scientists who administer clinical trial programs and monitor data integrity. Also required are epidemiologists to develop studies related to the incidence of Alzheimer's disease in special population groups as part of this initiative.

NIA is developing the flexibility required to meet the challenges posed by the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of scientific research. With the changing mix of basic and behavioral science, and increasing emphasis on integration, staff with varying scientific backgrounds are required. For example, the recent evaluation of the NIA's behavioral science program included a number of recommendations, which were supported by the National Advisory Council on Aging. Chief among the recommendations is the need for increased interaction among staff about substantive research opportunities that cut across disciplinary boundaries, requiring scientific staff with knowledge of biology, especially genetics and physiology. The role of staff will be to develop emerging research opportunities, including opportunities that cut across disciplines.

The scientific staff works as part of a total team with support staff to maximize mission accomplishment. NIA's support staff is committed to continuous improvement of its ways of doing business with the goal of reducing support costs to the absolute minimum consistent with executing the mission of the Institute. NIA efforts in this area have increased efficiency in support both to internal and external customers of the organization. Of note are efforts to exploit the usefulness of the Internet.

External customers of NIA benefit from the extensive use NIA makes of the Internet. NIA uses the Internet as a powerful tool to leverage the efforts of our staff, which allows us to direct additional resources to managing scientific research. NIA has created a searchable database of clinical trials related to AD. Here, customers can search a database of clinical trials on AD and dementia currently in progress at centers throughout the U.S. Another recent product is the Combined Health Information Database (CHID). CHID, a bibliographic database produced by Federal health-related agencies, lists a wealth of health promotion and education materials and program descriptions. Currently under development, and scheduled for completion by September 2001, is the Interactive AgePage, a web site developed jointly by the National Institute on Aging and the National Library of Medicine that serves to educate and inform older users about various health topics related to aging. The site includes background information, interactive quizzes, frequently asked questions, (FAQs), open-captioned video clips and a list of resources. Additional upgrades and enhancements are continuing. NIA plans to further enhance the on-line public information request process by simplifying on-line requests for publications and videotape materials through use of a publicly accessible web database on the NIA website. These efforts will simplify web management, oversight, and operations support, while reducing in-house efforts spent responding to public inquiries and requests for published material.

NIA Hiring Plans for FYs 2002/2003

	FY 2002	FY 2003	Total
INTRAMURAL			
Senior Investigators ¹	0	1	1
Investigators ¹	5	3	8
Other MD/PhDs, in FTE positions	14	6	20
Other MD/PhDs in non-FTE positions (IRTA, VF)	49	40	89
Other lab/clinical staff => GS-13	0	1	1
Other lab/clinical staff =< GS-12	10	8	18
Admin/support staff => GS-13	2	0	2
Admin/support staff =< GS-12	4	3	7
Infrastructure support => GS-13	0	0	0
Infrastructure support =< GS-12 ²	0	0	0
Summer and other temps not listed above (include summer IRTAs)	39	46	85
TOTAL INTRAMURAL	123	108	231
EXTRAMURAL			
HSA/SRAs and other senior level science administrators => GS-13	5	4	9
Other science administration positions =< GS-12	3	3	6
Grants Management and R&D Contract Staff => GS-13 ³	1	1	2
Grants Management and R&D Contract Staff =< GS-12 ³	4	4	8
Administrative and support staff => GS-13	2	2	4
Administrative and support staff =< GS-12	6	6	12
Infrastructure support => GS-13	0	0	0
Infrastructure support =< GS-12 ²	0	0	0
Summer and other temps not listed above	12	12	24
TOTAL EXTRAMURAL	33	32	65
IC TOTAL	156	140	296
¹ Using OIR professional designations			
² Include all wage grade positions related to infrastructure in this group			
³ Includes 1101, 1102, 301 and 303 series where individual is engaged in these activities on a full-time basis.			