

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Workforce Plan: FY 2002-2003

1. What skills are currently vital to the accomplishment of NIAAA goals and objectives?

NIAAA's mission to conduct and support research is complicated by the immense scope of science associated with alcohol research. There are both biomedical and behavioral aspects, which must be addressed by science. Alcohol as a toxic substance affects most organs in humans and requires a diversity of biomedical scientific expertise ranging from geneticists, neuroscientists, cardiologists, physiologists, and molecular biologists, as well as research clinicians to address behavioral issues.

Two workforce and organizational studies were conducted by NIAAA during FY 1999-FY 2000, as well as the development of several strategic research plans using outside expertise. The NIAAA has definitive and comprehensive research goals and objectives; and the organization was revised in FY 2000 accordingly. In addition, 21 percent of the extramural staffing resources are being redeployed to support the new areas of research and scientific opportunities identified in the Institute's strategic plans for FY 2000-FY 2005. This has occurred against the backdrop of a doubling of NIAAA's budget between FY 1999 and FY 2003. NIAAA's goal is to position itself to maximize the use of additional research resources while addressing workload needs and assuring accountability of its resources.

In FY 1997, the NIAAA established a Resource Allocation Committee (RAC) chaired by the Executive Officer, and comprised of senior staff representatives from both the extramural and intramural research divisions and offices. A key assignment of the RAC was to establish a participative framework for the Institute's response to the government-wide reinvention program. Consequently, a number of major streamlining steps were taken, including abolishment of an intramural research lab, reducing administrative and support positions, increasing the supervisory to staff ratio from 1:5 to 1:13, and reducing the appointment of Deputy Division Directors and Deputy Branch Chiefs.

With regard to the NIAAA's intramural research program, after the selection of a new Scientific Director in FY 2000, the intramural program was given a mandate to diversify its research mission by initiating new lines of research to better understand the biology of alcohol abuse and alcoholism. In FY 2000 NIAAA established the Laboratory of Physiologic Studies, which conducts research in two fields relevant to the biology of alcoholism and alcohol abuse not previously represented in the Intramural Program of NIAAA---neuroendocrinology and liver biology. Two new laboratories will be staffed in FY2002. The Laboratory of Molecular Physiology will focus on investigating molecular mechanisms underlying neurotransmitter-mediated modulation of voltage-gated ion channels and integrated into an alcohol-related program by extending its work into CNS synaptic systems. The Laboratory for Integrative Neuroscience provides an integrated neuroscience approach that successfully combines cellular/molecular techniques,

structural biological approaches, the use of transgenic and knockout animal models, and behavioral paradigms. In addition, the basic research components of the clinical program will be expanded. The rapidly expanding field of genetics research needs further development in the areas of bioinformatics, single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPS), and utilization of the recent advances in animal models.

2. What change in the work of the Institute is expected? What skills will no longer be required and what skills will be needed over the next 5 years?

As addressed in Part 1 above, the NIAAA has comprehensive strategic research plans for the next 5 years. The specific new future research initiatives include multiple research projects within the following areas:

Genetics	Medications Development
Molecular Biology	Endocrinology
Neuroscience	Neurotoxicology
Bioinformatics	Cardiovascular Studies
Diagnostics and Research Tools	Hepatology

NIAAA's extramural programs have been experiencing an attrition rate of 7.5 percent annually, representing 10 staff each year. In the intramural research program, the attrition rate is 18 percent (40 staff) annually, resulting from the large number of term-limited appointments for staff fellows, IRTAs, and summer fellows. In total, NIAAA's attrition rate has been 14 percent overall, representing 50 staff. A major redeployment of extramural staff is underway to ensure the appropriate skill mix of scientific staff. Redeployed vacancies resulting from attrition and reductions in support staff due to automation and new support systems are permitting recruitment of new scientific staff with appropriate research expertise.

3. Recruitment, Training and Retention Strategies.

The Institute continues to make extensive use of the Title 42 authority for recruitment and retention of senior scientific staff as well as 26 scientists in the Institute's intramural research program, including two lab chiefs. In addition, the Institute's Scientific Director was appointed under the Title 42 authority and received a recruitment bonus as well. The Institute Director and five senior scientists in the extramural research program have also been placed under the Title 42 authority. Overall, the Title 42 authority has enabled the NIAAA to be much more competitive with private industry and universities in the recruitment and retention of highly qualified scientific staff.

The Office of Resource Management recently developed an "Employee Training Support Plan" which is pending approval by the Institute Director. The plan recognizes the need to establish an equitable training policy that supports each employee's career growth and interests. This proposal separates the training budget from the travel budget. In addition, there are 4 options before the Institute Director: (1) mandatory training in a number of NIH support systems and commercial software packages, (2) implementing FasTrac for all employees with a personal computer "loan" program where employees can take home

recycled computers to take advantage of this training, (3) establish an EEO Scholarship program where NIAAA's EEO Committee will award a deserving individual funds to advance their education, and (4) provide each Division/Office a separate training budget.

As a recruitment strategy for scientists, the Institute recommends that an extramural research visiting program (staff fellows, visiting scientists, etc.) comparable to the current program in NIH's intramural research programs be developed and implemented.

4. How is the Institute addressing expected skill attrition?

Over the next two fiscal years, 63 Institute staff are eligible for regular retirement, including 13 intramural research staff, of which 2 are administrative and support staff. Of the total staff eligible for retirement, 46 are directly involved in research or research support. The other 17 positions are for administrative and support staff. NIAAA's future staffing plans are tied to the Institute's research strategic plans, which identify future research goals and objectives. Consequently, most vacated positions in FY 2002 and FY 2003 will be "recycled" to recruit scientists for specific research priority areas. By the end of FY 2003, NIAAA estimates that 54 extramural positions will be filled, of which 39 will be used to recruit scientific staff with the appropriate expertise to develop, monitor, and collaborate with high priority extramural research programs and their scientific staff. The remaining 15 positions will be used for administrative and support staff. In the intramural research program, 175 will be filled by the end of FY 2003. Of these 174 positions will be used for recruitment of scientific staff in such areas as neuroendocrinology, molecular biology, genetics, and clinical/behavioral research. Overall, NIAAA intends to fill a total of 229 positions by the end of FY 2003. Of these, 213 are for scientific staff and 16 are for administrative and support staff. As a result of this changed profile in Institute staff, a supervisory ratio of 1:14 will be achieved.

5. What impedes NIAAA's ability to recruit and retain highly qualified staff?

A key obstacle in recruitment of scientific staff is the salary and benefits gap between NIH and outside organizations competing for the same scientists. Pharmaceutical firms, universities, and corporations involved in research are able to offer extensive benefits such as stock options, free tuition, more personal leave, and higher salaries, which impairs recruitment of scientists by all of NIH. The cost of living in the Washington Metropolitan Area is another important factor. NIH has narrowed the salary and benefits gap by elevating salaries for scientists under Title 38 and Title 42, but the gap still exists. Another detriment to retention is that having basic research labs off campus impairs collaboration and interaction with on-campus facilities.

6. Where has the Institute delegated authority or reduced layers?

NIAAA has a very centralized management support function including human resources, grants and contracts award and administration, financial management, Information Technology, and administrative support. There are no administrative officers in the extramural divisions and offices. The Institute's intramural research program has a small cadre of administrative staff for purchasing, facilities management for the Labs, and management and inventory of Lab equipment. By FY 2003, the intramural administrative staff is currently being restructured by providing support to all labs on a centralized basis in order to streamline operations and reduce administrative staff. As part of NIH, the Institute has been a full participant in the ERA, intramural, and use of credit cards, which has significantly removed bureaucratic layering in obtaining scientific equipment, chemicals, and supplies for intramural research staff. NIAAA was one of the first Institutes to successfully use the Impact II system for the processing and award of research grants.

7. What barriers has the NIAAA identified to achieving workforce restructuring?

In the absence of increased new hiring authority, the major barrier confronting NIAAA is lack of management flexibility and employee incentives needed to maintain a "cutting edge" scientific staff. NIAAA strongly supports the use of buy-outs and the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority. In the past, these programs have enabled the Institute to use vacated positions to support high priority research and change the staff skill mix. The benefits of office automation and organizational streamlining can be implemented in an effective way, if buy-outs and early retirement authorities are provided to Institute management.

Lack of adequate and contiguous research space remains a major barrier to achieving workforce restructuring. NIAAA has been given prime space in the new Clinical Center to be completed by the end of FY 2003. This space, which includes a 12-bed ward, clinical testing space and wet laboratory space exceeds the current space in Building 10 by over 50 percent. It will be an important tool in recruiting a new Chief. The lease on the off-campus buildings that house the basic research component of the program will expire in 3-4 years. Negotiations for a new building to be completed by that time are on track and in an advanced stage. This will provide space of much higher quality than the current space, but the overall square footage of assignable space will remain unchanged. In order to accommodate the three new Laboratories (the two listed above plus the Laboratory of the Scientific Director), it is absolutely essential that NIAAA receive space in phase I of the NIH's New Neuroscience Research Center (NNRC). The Scientific Director is a member of the Executive Steering Committee of the NNRC and is making every effort to ensure that intramural scientists of NIAAA are represented in this inter-institute initiative.

NIAAA Hiring Plans for FYs 2002/2003

	FY 2002	FY 2003	Total
INTRAMURAL			
Senior Investigators ¹	0	2	2
Investigators ¹	1	2	3
Other MD/PhDs, in FTE positions	15	5	20
Other MD/PhDs in non-FTE positions (IRTA, VF)	34	18	52
Other lab/clinical staff => GS-13	7	2	9
Other lab/clinical staff =< GS-12	10	4	14
Admin/support staff => GS-13		1	1
Admin/support staff =< GS-12			0
Infrastructure support => GS-13			0
Infrastructure support =< GS-12 ²			0
Summer and other temps not listed above (include summer IRTAs)	30	35	65
TOTAL INTRAMURAL	97	69	166
EXTRAMURAL			
HSAs/SRAs and other senior level science administrators => GS-13	15	17	32
Other science administration positions =< GS-12	1	1	2
Grants Management and R&D Contract Staff => GS-13 ³	3	1	4
Grants Management and R&D Contract Staff =< GS-12 ³		1	1
Administrative and support staff => GS-13	1	1	2
Administrative and support staff =< GS-12	9	4	13
Infrastructure support => GS-13			0
Infrastructure support =< GS-12 ²			0
Summer and other temps not listed above			0
TOTAL EXTRAMURAL	29	25	54
IC TOTAL	126	94	220
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.			