



National Institutes of Health

The NIH Roadmap: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the NIH Roadmap?

The NIH Roadmap is an innovative approach to accelerate fundamental discovery and translation of that knowledge into effective prevention strategies and new treatments. The strategic initiatives to be funded under the NIH Roadmap will address critical roadblocks and knowledge gaps that currently constrain rapid progress in biomedical research. They will synergize the work of many NIH institutes and centers, and collectively represent a unique effort that no single or group of institutes or centers other entity can do, but are the responsibility of the NIH as a whole.

Three broad areas will be stimulated with these funds: 1) New Pathways to Discovery, which includes a comprehensive understanding of building blocks of the body's cells and tissues and how complex biological systems operate; structural biology; molecular libraries and imaging; nanotechnology; bioinformatics and computational biology; 2) Research Teams of the Future, including interdisciplinary research, high-risk research, and public-private partnerships; and 3) Re-engineering the Clinical Research Enterprise. Through these efforts, NIH will boost the resources and technologies needed for 21st century biomedical science.

2. How did NIH develop the NIH Roadmap?

NIH consulted extensively with its stakeholders – scientists, health care providers, and the public – to identify and prioritize the most pressing problems facing medical research today that can be uniquely addressed by the NIH. The initiatives to be funded, beginning in FY 2004, were selected because of their potential for having the biggest impact on the progress of medical research.

3. What difference will the NIH Roadmap make in people's health?

Through the NIH Roadmap, NIH aims to accelerate the pace of discovery and speed the application of new knowledge to the development of new prevention strategies, new diagnostics and new treatments, and, ultimately, to the transfer of these innovations to health care providers, and the public. A few examples follow:

- Research centers on nanomedicine will help scientists construct synthetic biological devices, such as miniature, implantable pumps for drug delivery or tiny sensors to scan for the presence of infectious agents or metabolic imbalances that could signify disease.
- There is a pressing need to better quantify clinically important symptoms and outcomes, including pain, fatigue, and quality of life that are now difficult to measure. New technologies will be developed and tested to measure these self-reported health states and outcomes across a wide range of illnesses and disease severities.
- A cadre of NIH Clinical Research Associates will be established. This group will be composed of community-based practitioners on the front lines of care who will receive specialized training in clinical research. These individuals will play a critical role both in advancing the discovery process and in disseminating research findings to the community.
- The efficiency and productivity of the Nation’s clinical research enterprise will be enhanced by support of a series of clinical research networks to rapidly conduct high quality clinical trials and research.
- A standardized data system, the National Electronic Clinical Trials and Research Network (NECTAR), will be developed to facilitate the sharing of data and resources and augment research performance and analysis.

4. How is the NIH Roadmap different from other NIH activities?

The NIH Roadmap builds on the phenomenal progress in biomedical research achieved, in part, through the recent doubling of the NIH budget. It reflects a shift to adaptive management of the NIH portfolio – an approach that will enable rapid responses to emerging needs and opportunities that do not fit clearly within the mission of a single or small group of institutes and centers.

A unique aspect of the NIH Roadmap is the NIH Director’s Innovator Awards that will enable highly talented, ingenious scientists to pursue “high risk-high reward” research. The review process for this new grant mechanism will emphasize the creativity and scientific potential of the person, rather than the project, thus providing a new way of supporting individuals who show the most promise for making seminal contributions to medical research.

5. Where can I get more information about the NIH Roadmap?

The URL for the NIH Roadmap Web site is: <http://nihroadmap.nih.gov>. The NIH home page can be found at: <http://www.nih.gov>.

As the NIH Roadmap initiatives move forward, plans and progress will be posted on the NIH Roadmap Web site.