

OBSSR's 4th Strategic Plan: 2024 - 2028

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A bit about me...

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NIH Associate Director for Behavioral and Social Sciences Research
Director, Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research
(as of July 30, 2023)



When asked to reflect upon mistakes in his tenure as NIH Director, Dr. Francis Collins said:

“Maybe we underinvested in research on human behavior.”
(*PBS Newshour 12/20/21*)

About 1 of 5 American adults have not received any
Covid-19 vaccination
(*CDC, 2022; Mayo Clinic, 2022*)

FIRST OPINION

Ignoring behavioral and social sciences undermines the U.S. response to Covid-19

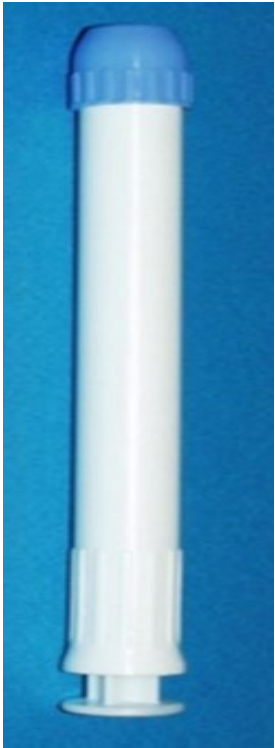
By Judith D. Auerbach and Andrew D. Forsyth March 9, 2022

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National Institutes of Health
Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research

Without attention to BSSR, the promises of even the greatest biomedical breakthroughs can fall short . . .



Oral PrEP could be a game-changer but for:

- Stubbornly low uptake (CDC, 2021)
- Initial resistance from HIV care systems (Mayer, et al 2020)
- PrEP stigma in the community (Calabrese & Underhill, 2015; Rosengren, et al, 2021)

“In the VOICE trials, we learned that we can not determine a product’s efficacy if people do not use it” (Marazzo, et al., 2015)

BSSR shapes health policies & improves health outcomes

- 1. Smoking Cessation Programs:** Understanding the psychological aspects of addiction and behavior change has led to the creation of interventions that promote smoking cessation and reduce tobacco-related health issues.
- 2. HIV Prevention Strategies:** Studies on risk perception, stigma, and communication have helped develop targeted interventions to promote safe behaviors, increase awareness, and reduce the spread of HIV.
- 3. Physical Activity Promotion:** Understanding social determinants and behavioral patterns has led to the development of programs encouraging exercise, ultimately reducing the risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular problems and obesity.
- 4. Vaccination Campaigns:** Understanding factors influencing vaccine acceptance, addressing vaccine hesitancy, and tailoring communication strategies have improved vaccination rates, preventing the spread of infectious diseases.
- 5. Mental Health Interventions:** Evidence-based interventions for mental health issues include therapies, support systems, and awareness campaigns aimed at reducing stigma and promoting early intervention for mental health conditions.
- 6. Dietary Interventions:** Social science research on dietary habits and cultural influences has informed public health efforts to combat obesity and related health issues. Tailoring nutrition education and interventions to specific communities has been shown to be more effective in promoting healthier eating habits.
- 7. Adherence to Medical Treatment:** Understanding patient behaviors, motivations, and barriers has led to interventions that improve medication adherence and overall health outcomes.
- 8. Reducing Health Disparities:** Social science research on disparities based on socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity can lead to more equitable health outcomes.

NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research



Healthier Lives Through Behavioral and Social Sciences



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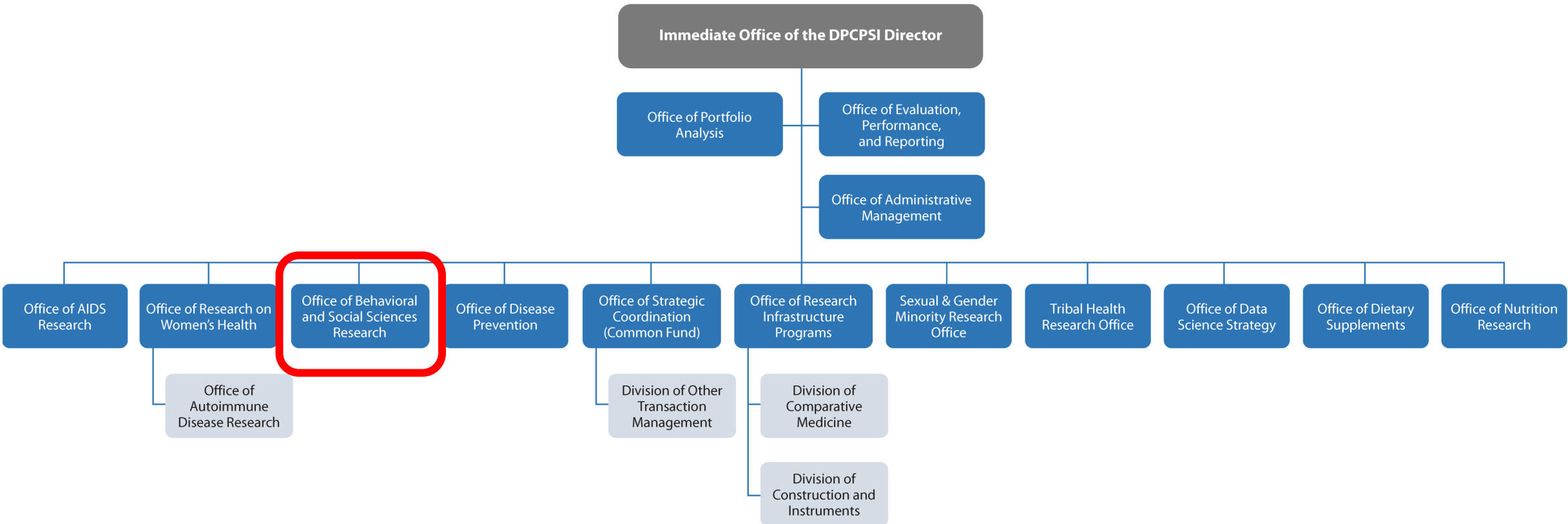


National Institutes of Health
Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research

NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR)

- OBSSR was created by Congress in **1993** (opened in 1995) and is responsible for:
 - **Coordinating** the health-relevant behavioral and social sciences at NIH; and
 - **Identifying challenges and opportunities** to advance these sciences at NIH

OBSSR sits within the Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives (DPCPSI) in the NIH Office of the Director



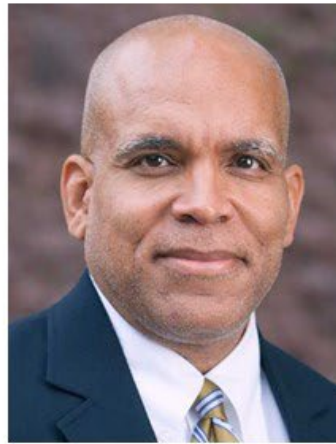
Past OBSSR Directors



Dr. Norman B. Anderson,
Director (1995–2000)



Dr. Peter Kaufmann,
Acting Director (2000)



Dr. Raynard S. Kington,
Director (2000–2003)



Dr. Virginia S. Cain,
Acting Director (2003–2005)



Dr. David Abrams,
Director (2005–2008)



Dr. Christine Bachrach,
Acting Director (2008–2010)



Dr. Deborah Olster,
Acting Director (2010–2011)



Dr. Robert Kaplan,
Director (2011–2014)



Dr. William T. Riley,
Acting Director (2014)
Director (2015–2021)



Dr. Christine Hunter,
Acting Director (2022–2023)

OBSSR Leadership



Jane M. Simoni, Ph.D.
Director, OBSSR
Associate Director for Behavioral and
Social Sciences Research, NIH



Janine M. Simmons, M.D., Ph.D.
Deputy Director



Wendy B. Smith, MA., Ph.D., B.C.B.
Associate Director

OBSSR Leadership



Rosalind (Roz) King, Ph.D.
Chief, Scientific Development and
Coordination (SDC) Section



Kathryn (Katie) Morris, M.P.H.
Chief, Policy, Planning and Analyses
(PAA) Section

OBSSR Staff

HSA = Health Scientist Administrator
HSPA = Health Science Policy Administrator
SBSA = Social & Behavioral Science Administrator



Farheen Akbar, M.P.H.
HSPA



Deshirée Belis, M.P.H.
HSPA



Dara R. Blachman-Demner, Ph.D.
HSA



Kristin Brethel-Haurwitz, Ph.D.
SBSA



Alyssa Dolge, M.P.H.
HSPA



William Elwood, Ph.D.
HSA



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HSA



Jessica Gowda, M.S.
HSPA



Dana Greene, Ph.D.
HSA



Beth Jaworski, Ph.D.
SBSA



Priyanka Joseph, MPA, MFA
Scientific Writer [C]



Sydney O'Connor, Ph.D.
HSA



Sarika Parasuraman, Ph.D., M.P.H.
HSPA



Adam Politis
HSA



Lizette M. Rivera- Arnold, MPA, PMP
Project Manager [C]



Paula Roberts
Program Specialist



Michael Spittel, Ph.D.
HSA



Erica Spotts, Ph.D.
HSA



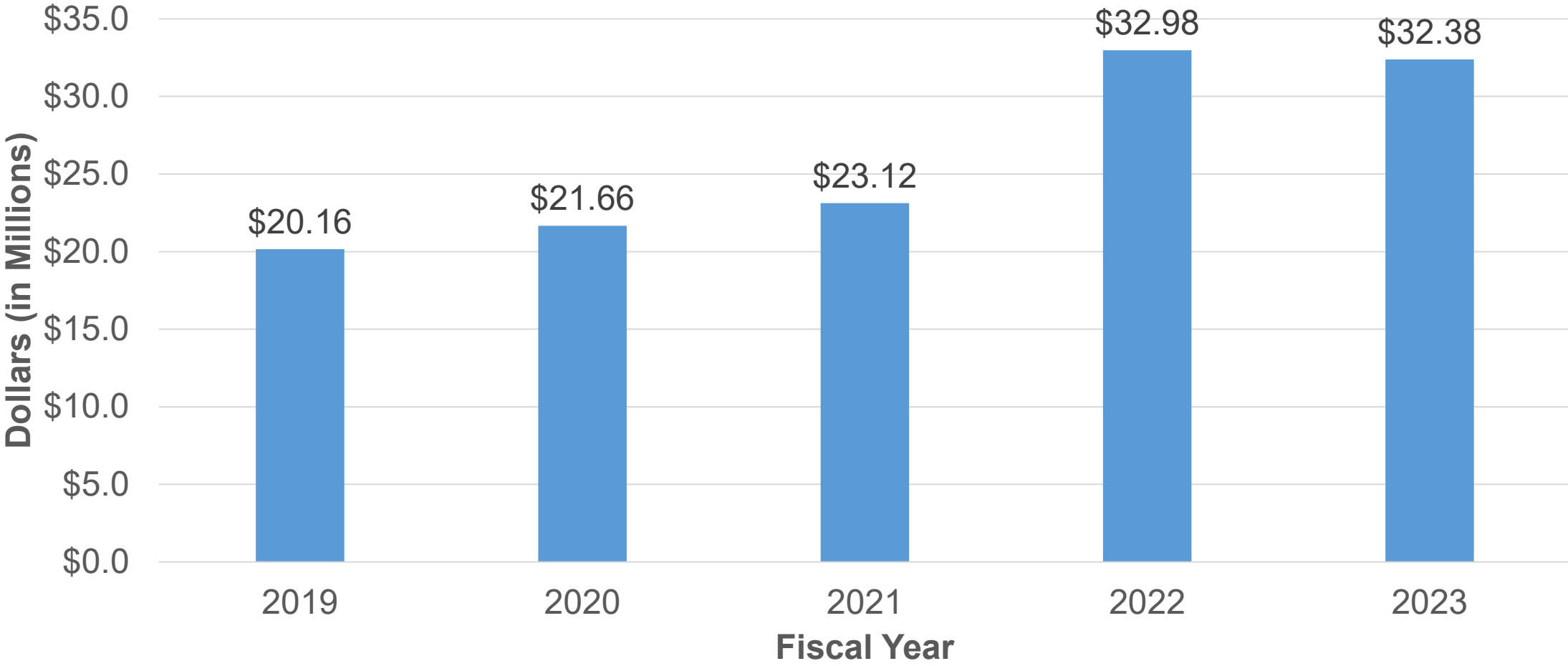
Deborah Young-Hyman, Ph.D., CDE
HSA

We are hiring . . .

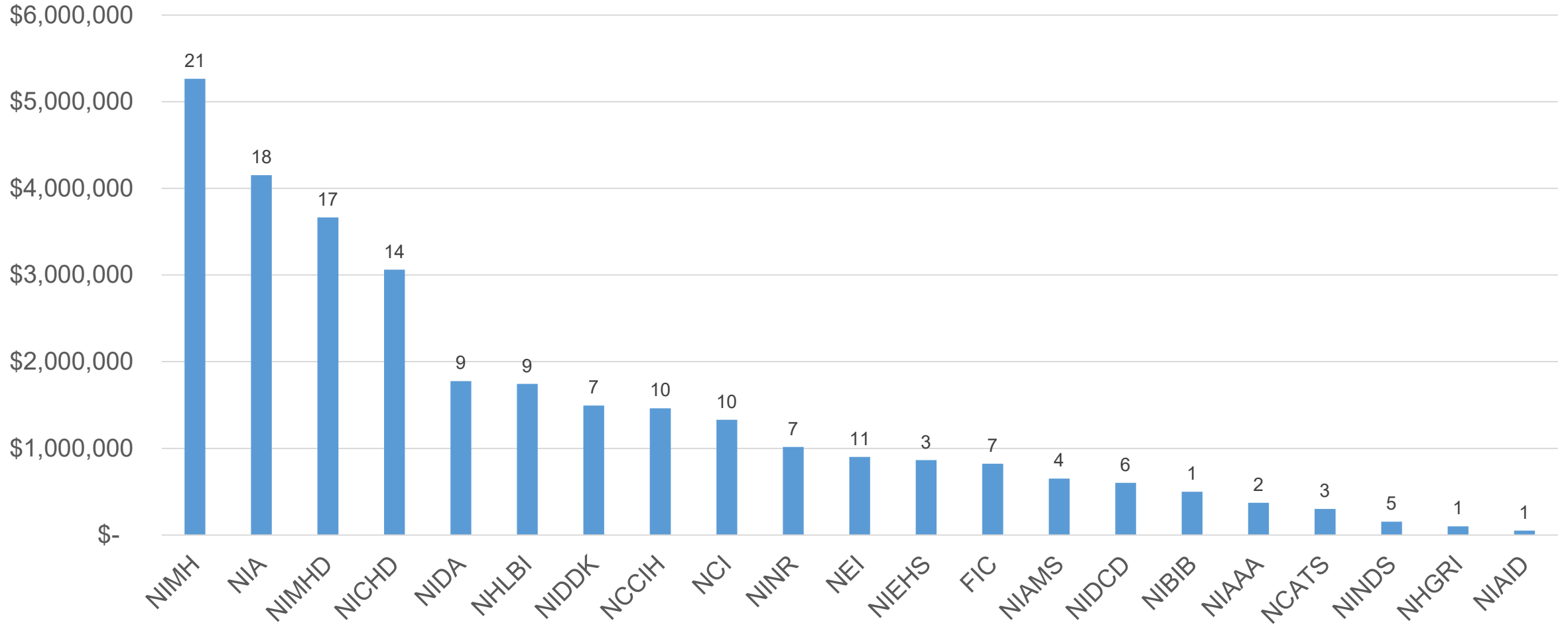
OBSSR Budget

- ~\$40.8M in FY23 (still awaiting FY24 budget)
- OBSSR budget has increased steadily over time with the largest jump in FY22
- ~75-80% of OBSSR budget is distributed across NIH ICs to co-fund high quality BSSR that is consistent with the OBSSR mission.

OBSSR Co-funding Amount by Fiscal Year, 2019 - 2023



OBSSR Grant Co-Funding across NIH ICs, FY23



FY24 Scientific Priority Areas include . . .

- **Behavior Change, Maintenance, and Mechanisms of Impact**

Theory-informed research on the initiation and maintenance of health-promoting behaviors and the mechanisms (basic behavioral and physiologic) underlying behavioral interventions that promote health.

- **Social Connection and Health**

Research that examines the role of social relationships and interactions (e.g., in dyads, families, and other social groups) on health, including the mechanisms through which social isolation or connectedness accelerate or impede biologic and other disease processes, affect the execution of health behaviors, and impact overall health and well-being.

FY24 Scientific Priority Areas include . . .(2)

- **Multi-level Research**

Research that examines the interaction of social and behavioral influences on health at multiple levels (i.e., biological, intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, organizational, structural, environmental, policy)

- **Integration of BSSR into Biomedical Research**

Research, training initiatives, and other programs such as workshops that promote and provide opportunities to increase the integration of BSSR within IC activities typically focused mainly on biomedical priorities.

4TH Strategic Plan Outline

- ▶ *Mission*
- ▶ *Vision*
- ▶ *Strategic Priorities:*
 - ▶ Research
 - ▶ Capacity
 - ▶ Operational
- ▶ *Cross-cutting Theme*

Strategic Planning Process

Assessment of the *2017 – 2021* Strategic Plan

Two **Requests for Information (RFI)** were conducted, including outreach among the extramural research community and other external collaborators

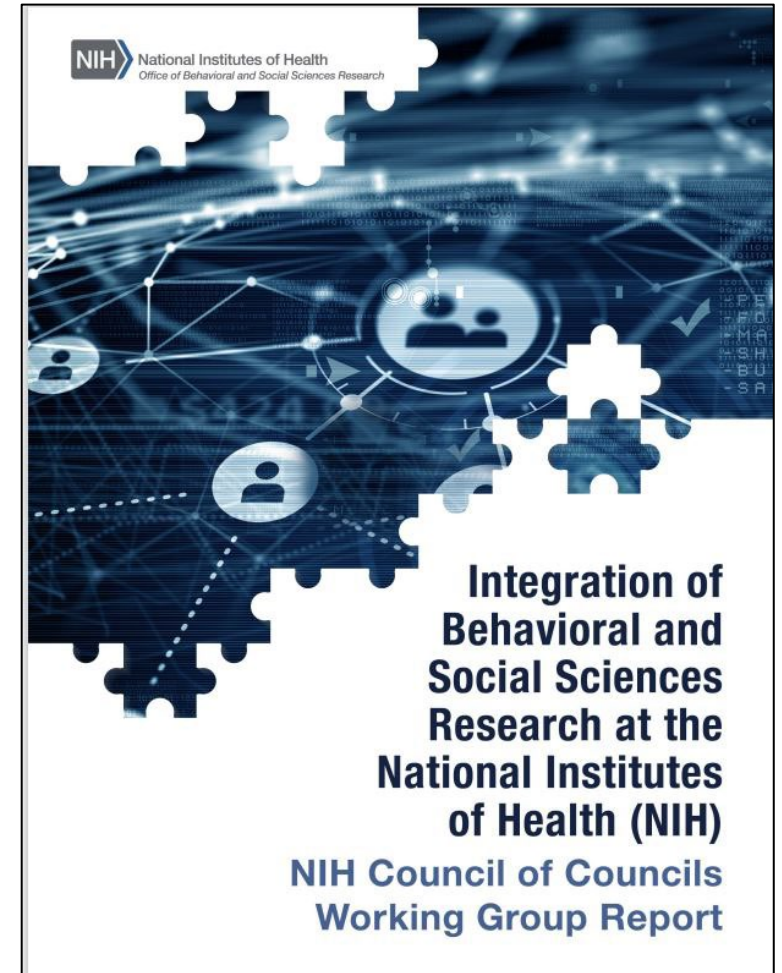
Listening Sessions with NIH Staff and Leadership

Feedback from the NIH BSSR Coordinating Committee



Council of Councils Working Groups Input

- ▶ *NIH-Wide Research Opportunities in the Basic Behavioral and Social Sciences (May 2021)*
- ▶ *Integration of Behavioral and Social Science Research at the National Institutes of Health (May 2022)*



OBSSR Mission

- **Enhance** the impact of health-related BSSR,
- **Coordinate** BSSR conducted or supported by the NIH and **integrate** these sciences within the larger NIH research enterprise, and
- **Communicate** health-related BSSR findings to various stakeholders within and outside the federal government.

OBSSR (new) Vision

We envision a world in which the synergistic integration of behavioral and social sciences into biomedical research leads to innovative scientific discovery, efficacious health-promotion interventions, and equitable implementation strategies that will improve health for all.

Scientific Priorities: Research

1. Synergistic Inquiry:

- a. Integrate and coordinate BSSR across the NIH
- b. Catalyze a cumulative BSSR knowledge base
- c. Improve the synergy of basic and applied BSSR

2. Investigational Innovation:

Promote novel research measures, designs, and data analytics for BSSR

3. Implementation & Impact:

Accelerate sustained adoption of BSSR findings in practice and policy

Coordination and Integration (examples)



- Co-funding program
- Designated staff liaisons with each of the ICOs
- Leadership-to-leadership alliances
- Involvement in NIH-wide Initiatives: e.g., HEAL, ECHO, BRAIN, SBE COVID, SDOH, IMPROVE, Music and Health, Adherence Network, ComPASS
- BSSR integration report
- Analytics tools for data on NIH-funded research

Coordination and Integration (examples) 2



- Time-Sensitive Opportunities for Health Research NOFO
- BSSR clinical trials resources (Good Clinical Practice Training)
- Health economics funded-research analysis
- Open science webinar series
- Future of Work report and future of scientific conferencing

Initiatives Led or Co-led by OBSSR (1)

- **Violence Research Initiatives** (<https://obssr.od.nih.gov/about/violence-research-initiatives>)
 - **Firearms Mortality and Injury Prevention Research** to conduct research on firearm injury and mortality prevention by taking a comprehensive approach to studying the underlying causes and evidence-based methods of prevention of firearm injury, including crime prevention.
 - **Understanding and Addressing the Health Impacts of Online Abuse and Harassment Workshop** (12/23), coordinated with NICHD and White House Task Force Online Abuse and Harassment
- **Social, Behavioral, and Economic Impacts (SBE) of COVID-19 in Vulnerable and Health Disparity Population Initiative** <https://sbecovid.od.nih.gov>
 - Encourages research to: 1) improve the prediction of various mitigation efforts, 2) assess downstream health and healthcare access effects from the economic downturn, and 3) evaluate digital and community interventions to ameliorate these health effects.

Initiatives Led or Co-led by OBSSR (2)

- **BRAIN Initiative: Brain Behavior Quantification and Synchronization (BBQS)**
 - Supports the development and validation of next generation platforms and analytic approaches to precisely quantify behaviors in humans and link them with simultaneously recorded brain activity.
 - R61/R33 RFA: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-MH-22-240.html>
 - R34 RFA: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-DA-24-042.html>
- **NIH Basic Behavioral and Social Science Opportunity Network (OppNet, now EC-bBSSR)** (<https://obssr.od.nih.gov/about/oppnet>)
 - Identifies cross-cutting basic BSSR areas and published funding opportunities to stimulate basic behavioral and social sciences research (bBSSR) applications that complemented the interests and missions of the ICs.

Initiatives Led or Co-led by OBSSR (3)

- **Behavioral Ontologies**

- Funded 2022 NASEM report, *Ontologies in the Behavioral Sciences: Accelerating Research and the Spread of Knowledge* (<https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/accelerating-social-and-behavioral-science-through-ontology-development-and-use>)
- Ongoing project to enhance the integration of up-to-date BSSR terms into MeSH
- Awaiting review of applications to NOFO on Accelerating Behavioral and Social Science through Ontology Development and Use (U24/U01)

- **Research and Application in Team Science**

- NASEM consensus study that started in Aug 2023 to understand how team science can best be supported, including through the development, support and integration of diverse teams comprising members prepared for the future of work in health-related research.

Scientific Priorities: Capacity

Develop and Diversify the BSSR Workforce

Training (examples)



- T32 Training in Advanced Data Analytics for Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (TADA)
- R25 Short Courses on Innovative Methodologies and Approaches in the Behavioral and Social Sciences
- Administrative Supplements to NIH-funded T32 and TL1 Training Grants to Better Integrate Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSS) with other Health-Related Sciences

Scientific Priorities: Operational

1. Uphold Values of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)
2. Build Equitable Partnerships and Collaborations
3. Improve Communication among Scientists and with the Public

NIH BSSR Coordinating Committee Reps

CSR: Kate Fothergill

FIC: Marya Levintova & Laura Povlich

NCATS: Audie Atienza & Elaine Collier

NCCIH: Lanay Mudd

NCI: Susan Czajkowski & Paige Green

NEI: Cheri Wiggs

NHGRI: Dave Kaufman & Laura Koehly

NHLBI: Rebecca Campo & Laurie Donze

NIA: Lisbeth Nielsen & John Phillips

NIAAA: Robert Freeman

NIAID: Edith Swann & Lara Miller

NIAMS: Stephanie George

NIBIB: Andrew Weitz

NICHD: Layla Esposito

NIDA: Holly Moore & Shelley Su

NIDCD: Holly Storkel & Kelly King

NIDCR: Vacant

NIDDK: Maureen Monaghan-Center & Katrina Serrano

NIEHS: Toccara Chamberlain, Lindsey Martin & Liam O'Fallon

NIGMS: Mercedes Rubio

NIMH: Di Cross & Michael Stirratt

NIMHD: Arielle Gillman

NINDS: Debra Babcock

NINR: Karen Kehl & David Tilley

NLM: Rebecca Goodwin & Meryl Sufian

OD/AOU: Holly Garriock

OD/ECHO: Clay Mash

OD/OAR: Paul Gaist & Amber Wilson

OD/ODP: Jennifer Alvidrez, Melissa Green Parker, & Denise Stredrick

OD/OEPR: Sarah Rhodes

OD/ORWH: Elizabeth Barr & David Thomas

OD/SGMRO: Irene Avila & Karen Parker

Communications (examples)



- Matilda White Riley Honors (annual in May/June)
- NIH BSSR Research Festival (annual in Nov/Dec)
- Director's webinar series
- OBSSR Connector Newsletter
- BSSR Website with Accomplishments
- History Timeline Project

Cross-Cutting Theme (new):

Health Equity

OBSSR Events

December 2023

- Understanding and Addressing the Health Impacts of Online Abuse and Harassment Workshop (12/7 – 12/8)

March 2024

- OBSSR Director's Webinar on Social Connection with Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Brigham Young University (3/19)
- OBSSR Director's Webinar on Social and Computational Science with Dr. Timnit Gebru, The Distributed AI Research Institute (DAIR) (3/26)

May 2024

- 2024 NIH Director's Wednesday Afternoon Lecture Series (WALS) with Dr. Jenny Tung, Duke University (5/1)

<https://obssr.od.nih.gov/news-and-events>

OBSSR Events (2)

May 2024

- Matilda White Riley Annual Event (5/20)

June 2024

- Behavioral and Social Science Insights for the Future of Scientific Conferencing – A Workshop (6/6, 6/7, and 6/11)

July 2024

- OBSSR Director's Webinar on the intersection of social science, aging, and health disparities with Dr. Rebeca Wong, University of Texas Medical Branch (7/23)

September 2024

- OBSSR Director's Webinar on Justice involved individuals and access to healthcare with Dr. Emily Wang, Yale University (9/17)

<https://obssr.od.nih.gov/news-and-events>

Discussion Prompts

- Challenges to and opportunities for advancing BSSR at NIH?
- Specific areas in which OBSSR can improve its coordination of BSSR at NIH?
- Opportunities for new or improved partnerships at NIH, within HHS, or beyond?
- New topical areas or methodologies in which OBSSR can be contributing to facilitating the science?
- Training opportunities we could offer?

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