

# NIH Common Template for Strategic Plans

Congress stipulated that NIH Institute and Center strategic plans follow a common template.<sup>1</sup> In response, NIH developed the *NIH Common Template for Strategic Plans*, which was approved for use with strategic plans issued after January 1, 2019. The Common Template mirrors the NIH-Wide Strategic Plan, which helps to **harmonize** strategic planning across NIH.

The Common Template outlines content to be covered by Institute and Center strategic plans, including:

- **Overview and Introduction:** Here, the Institute or Center introduces their mission and goals. This section will also typically contain a Director's Message and information on the organization and founding of the Institute or Center.
- **Scientific Strategy:** Here, the Institute or Center sets out its scientific vision and research priorities for the duration of the plan.<sup>2</sup> New initiatives are outlined and accomplishments under the previous plan may be described.
- **Stewardship Strategy:** Here, the Institute or Center outlines their approach to serving as an efficient and effective steward of public resources, and their management and accountability strategy with regard to these activities. This section may cover a broad array of stewardship activities, including (but not limited to) priority setting, workforce diversity, scientific innovation rigor and reproducibility, and risk management.
- **Description of the Strategic Planning Process:** Here, the Institute or Center describes the process they undertook to develop the strategic plan, including how input from internal and external stakeholders was sought and incorporated.

There are several benefits to using the Common Template, including: **alignment** between Institute and Center strategic plans and NIH-Wide Strategic Plan; **consistency and clarity** across Institute and Center strategic plans; and reinforcement of **best practices** for development of strategic plans by requiring specific content.

---

<sup>1</sup> Section 402(m) of the *Public Health Service (PHS) Act*, as amended by the *21st Century Cures Act*, requires that strategic plans developed and updated by the Institutes and Centers of the NIH are prepared regularly, are informed by the NIH-Wide Strategic Plan, and shall have a Common Template

<sup>2</sup> Narratives in this section of the template must also address the 21 Century Cures Act IC strategic planning requirement (42 USC 289a-2(a)(3)) to ensure that future activities by the ICs consider women and minorities, and are focused on reducing health disparities.