

Advancing Health Communication Science and Practice – A Common Fund Proposal

Background

Effective health communication is a complex and multi-factored process that is critical to a wide variety of health outcomes of interest across the NIH. The new and evolving communication ecosystem (characterized by changing technology and social media) offers many benefits, including greater access to health information and provision of online support. However, challenges in effectively harnessing this ecosystem and the increased spread of misinformation have hampered public health efforts, contributing to divisiveness, distrust, and negative health impacts as public trust in science and scientists continues to erode. This proposed Common Fund program will support a synergistic and cross-cutting health communication research program to address critical gaps applicable to NIH’s mission, and will develop and implement health communication approaches for positive and equitable health outcomes. Through a community-engaged, equity-focused, and full-cycle research framework, this program aims to better understand what health communication approaches work for whom, under what circumstances, and why.

Program Goal

This program will investigate, develop, test, and disseminate new approaches for effective and equitable health communication, with a focus on measuring communication exposure and impact, addressing misinformation, engaging communities, and building trust.

Initiatives

The proposed initiatives are based on input and recommendations gathered from Request for Information responses, expert feedback, a portfolio analysis, a targeted workshop, a landscape analysis, and IC directors:

1. Research Network of multidisciplinary research projects to inform health communication science and practice and develop sustainable and adoptable health communication approaches. In years 3-5, a sub-initiative will support research to address emerging and time-sensitive health communication challenges identified by communities.
2. Methods and Measurement Research Projects to develop and test innovative methods and measures that assess health communication exposure, impact, context, predictors, and outcomes. This initiative will include key partnerships with technology/social media platforms, marketing experts, community members, and other key communicators.
3. Coordination and Dissemination Center to convene, facilitate, and share pertinent research findings and key program deliverables, across the consortium and to health communication practitioners.

Deliverables

- Effective and adoptable health communication approaches and an understanding of why/how they work
- An expanded cadre of health communication researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplines
- Validated methods and measures relevant to communication predictors and outcomes
- A repository of evidence-based measures, tools, and other resources for dissemination to end users
- Active dissemination to health communication researchers and other relevant audiences
- Robust assessments of the uptake, use, and impact of all program resources

Budget Phase I: \$154.3M over 5 years	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	Total
Initiative 1: Research Network (~15-20 projects)	\$25M	\$25M	\$22M	\$22M	\$22M	\$116M
Sub-initiative funding begins in year 3 (\$200K x 15 sites)	\$0	\$0	\$3M	\$3M	\$3M	\$9M
Initiative 2: Methods and Measurement Research Projects (6-8 projects)	\$2M	\$2M	\$2M	\$2M	\$2M	\$10M
Initiative 3: Coordination and Dissemination Center	\$3M	\$3M	\$3M	\$3M	\$3M	\$15M
RMS – staff salary, workshops, travel	\$300K	\$1M	\$1M	\$1M	\$1M	\$4.3M
Total	\$30.3M	\$31M	\$31M	\$31M	\$31M	\$154.3M