# POSITION DESCRIPTION

**Director of the National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and human services**

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| **OVERVIEW** |
| Senate Committee | Health, Education, Labor and Pensions |
| Agency Mission | To enhance and protect the health and well-being of all Americans by providing effective health and human services and fostering advances in medicine, public health and social services |
| Position Overview | The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is an agency of the Department of Health and Human Services and the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting biomedical research. NIH investigates ways to prevent, treat and cure common and rare diseases. It is the largest source of funding for medical research in the world, and more 80 percent of its budget is grants going to 3,000 institutes and universities. Comprised of 27 separate Institutes and centers, each focusing on specific biomedical science disciplines, NIH provides leadership and financial support to researchers throughout the world. The director of NIH sets policy and provides leadership and oversight for the programs and activities of all NIH components.  |
| Compensation | Level IV $155,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary of Health and Human Services  |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| Management Scope | In fiscal 2015, HHS had $1,028 billion in outlays and 63,324 total employment. Within the Department of Health and Human Services, the NIH is comprised of the Director’s office and 27 institutes and centers, each with a specific research agenda. The Director oversees all 27 institutes and centers, programs and activities, and is supported by NIH deputy directors. NIH has requested a budget of $33.136 billion for fiscal 2017. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Provides scientific leadership and vision for determining promising research breakthroughs that will result in the prevention, mitigation of, or cure for common and rare diseases
* Directs funds to support NIH’s internal biomedical research and target grants to support scientific and health-related research in each state and across the world
* Provides planning, coordination and management oversight to all 27 institutes and centers
* Engages with a range of stakeholders and advisors to set strategy and policies for NIH program coordination
* Fosters fundamental creative discoveries and innovative research strategies, and their applications, as a basis for ultimately protecting and improving public health
* Promotes and defends the integrity of science and its use
* Develops, maintains and renews human and physical resources that will ensure the nation’s capability to prevent disease
* Expands the knowledge base in medical and associated sciences to enhance the nation’s economic well-being and ensure a continued high return on the public investment in research
* Exemplifies and promotes the highest level of scientific integrity, public accountability and social responsibility in the conduct of science
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| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration]  |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** |
| Requirements | * A physician, traditionally
* Commitment to the advancement of the scientific and medical fields with significant achievement in biomedical research
* Credibility within the scientific community (commonly a member of the Institute of Medicine in the National Academy of Sciences)
* Experience in managing multiple large-scale scientific research-based or research-funding-based organizations in academia, government and/or industry, ideally in a multidisciplinary and public environment
* Demonstrated excellence in setting strategy and policy for managing and overseeing extensive scientific grant making
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| Competencies | * Energetic and innovative thinker with the ability to analyze the mission of NIH and build on its history and powerful current programs in a fast-changing external environment
* Leadership with excellent judgment and capacity to serve in a publicly visible role with the comfort and ability to respond to the media and the public, and advocate on behalf of the mission of NIH
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| **PAST APPOINTEES** |
| Francis S. Collins (2009-Present) (acting) – Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, NIH; Professor of Internal Medicine and Human Genetics, University of Michigan; Appointed by Pope Benedict XVI to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences Member of the Institute of Medicine and the National Academy of Sciences; Awarded Presidential Medal of Freedom and the National Medal of Science. |
| Raynard S. Kington, M.D., Ph.D. (2008-2009) – President and Professor of Economics, Grinnell College; Principal Deputy Director, NIH; Division Director at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Associate Director for Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, NIH; Director, Division of Health Examination Statistics and Director, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), CDC; Medical Director, Sub-Acute Care Service, UCLA Medical Center; Senior Natural Scientist, Social Policy Department, RAND Corporation |
| Elias A. Zerhouni (2002-2008) – President, Global R&D, Sanofi Aventis; Independent Director, Danaher Corporation; Senior Fellow, Global Health Initiative, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Chair & Professor, Department of Radiology, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine; Member of the Institute of Medicine and the National Academy of Sciences; Awarded the French National Order of the Legion of Honor |
| Harold E. Varmus (1993-1999) – Director, National Cancer Institute; Co-Chair, President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, the White House; President & CEO, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; Professor at University of California, San Francisco; Member of the Institute of Medicine and National Academy of Sciences; Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Medicine for cancer research |

# Endnotes

This position description was created with the help of Russell Reynolds Associates, a global executive search firm.

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)