August 7, 2015

Lawrence A. Tabak, DDS, PhD
Principal Deputy Director
National Institutes of Health
Building 1, One Center Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892-0160

VIA EMAIL TO: lawrence.tabak@nih.gov

Dear Dr. Tabak:

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and suggestions on the Framework for the NIH-wide strategic plan. With the opportunities for discovery and the demand for funds greatly outstripping the current research resources, priorities must be set carefully. We commend efforts to incorporate outside viewpoints in the strategic planning process.

As it stands, the Framework provides a sensible starting point and is designed to complement the many outstanding programs for research and training created by NIH’s 27 Institutes, Centers, and Offices (ICOs). We are pleased that the NIH-wide plan does not intend to usurp the planning functions of the individual ICOs. On-going programs that support investigator-initiated research have been the principal driver for progress in the biomedical sciences, and we hope that new initiatives are not launched at the expense of these time-tested mechanisms.

In these challenging times of constrained investment in research, it is important to consider the broader research context. The “Overview” discussion of the research landscape, including an analysis of “the constraints confronting the community in the face of lost purchasing power,” is important. Progress in the biomedical sciences, and the application of this knowledge to the improvement of human health, demand that we address these issues, and we hope that this perspective guides the planning process.

The “Areas of Opportunity that Apply Across Biomedicine” listed in the Framework provide an appropriate guide for identifying trans-NIH themes. The topics listed reflect broadly accepted goals and complement the existing ICO programs and plans. We are pleased by the recognition of the value of fundamental science.
We have submitted these comments to the RFI web page and look forward to working closely with NIH as it designs specific initiatives.

Sincerely,

Parker Antin, Ph.D.
FASEB President