



FASEB

Federation of American Societies
for Experimental Biology

Representing Over 110,000 Researchers

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FASEB Comments in Response to Request for Information (RFI): Inviting Comments and Suggestions on Updating the NIH Mission Statement [[FR Doc. 2023-18989](#)]

Submitted electronically via [comment form](#) on November 7, 2023

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) provided the following feedback to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on proposed revisions to the agency's mission statement.

NIH's current mission statement reads as follows:

To seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability.

Proposed revisions as presented in the RFI (new text in bold):

*To seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and **to apply that knowledge to optimize health and prevent or reduce illness for all people.***

FASEB's suggested revisions to the proposed update (FASEB-suggested text underlined):

*To seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and **to apply that knowledge to protect and improve health and alleviate illness for all people.***

FASEB's responses to the specific questions posed in the RFI (submitted via Web form) are listed below:

1. Feedback on whether the proposed new mission statement reflects the goals and objectives as outlined in the [NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025](#)

Overall, the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) finds that the proposed revisions to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) mission statement remain aligned with the three core objectives and five cross-cutting themes of the current NIH-Wide Strategic Plan. FASEB also appreciates the responsiveness of the proposed changes to the recommendations received from the thought-leaders serving on the Advisory Committee to the Director Working Group on Diversity, Subgroup on Individuals with Disabilities. In our responses to Questions 2 and 3, we highlight additional edits to further align the revised mission statement to the NIH-Wide Strategic Plan and further refine language that could be perceived as ableist.

FASEB recommends the following revised statement:

*To seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and **to apply that knowledge to protect and improve health and alleviate illness for all people.***

2. Suggestions for specific language that could be added to the proposed mission statement and why

Full members: American Physiological Society • American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology • American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics • American Society for Investigative Pathology • The American Association of Immunologists • American Association for Anatomy • Society for Developmental Biology • Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities • The American Society for Bone and Mineral Research • The American Society for Clinical Investigation • Society for the Study of Reproduction • Endocrine Society • American College of Sports Medicine • Genetics Society of America • The Histochemical Society • Society for Glycobiology • Association for Molecular Pathology • Society for Redox Biology and Medicine • Society For Experimental Biology and Medicine • American Aging Association • Society for Leukocyte Biology • American Federation for Medical Research • Shock Society • **Associate members:** American Society of Human Genetics • Society for Birth Defects Research & Prevention • American Society for Nutrition

As indicated in our response to Question 1, FASEB recommends two additional revisions to the proposed mission statement: replacing “optimize” with “protect and improve” and “prevent or reduce” with “alleviate.” Both suggestions are intended to remove terms that could be interpreted as ableist. Our concern with “optimize” is that it is a term used to describe objects or actions (e.g., treatments, interventions, and cures, as highlighted within Objective 1 of the NIH-Wide Strategic Plan) rather than people. The suggested replacement – “protect and improve” – also appears in the opening paragraph of the NIH-Wide Strategic Plan. Similarly, the phrasing “prevent or reduce” still closely resembles the language of the original mission statement. Therefore, we recommend replacing with “alleviate” to address concerns that the proposed revisions could be interpreted as perpetuating ableist beliefs.

(Note: Since FASEB is recommending revisions, responses to Questions 2 and 3 are the same)

3. Feedback on any specific language that could be removed from the proposed mission statement and why

As indicated in our response to Question 1, FASEB recommends two additional revisions to the proposed mission statement: replacing “optimize” with “protect and improve” and “prevent or reduce” with “alleviate.” Both suggestions are intended to remove terms that could be interpreted as ableist. Our concern with “optimize” is that it is a term used to describe objects or actions (e.g., treatments, interventions, and cures, as highlighted within Objective 1 of the NIH-Wide Strategic Plan) rather than people. The suggested replacement – “protect and improve” – also appears in the opening paragraph of the NIH-Wide Strategic Plan. Similarly, the phrasing “prevent or reduce” still closely resembles the language of the original mission statement. Therefore, we recommend replacing with “alleviate” to address concerns that the proposed revisions could be interpreted as perpetuating ableist beliefs.

(Note: Since FASEB is recommending revisions, responses to Questions 2 and 3 are the same)