

APS Calls on White House, NIH to Integrate Behavioral Science into New Health Agency

September 29, 2021



In a letter to the White House and the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Association for Psychological Science and other behavioral science groups have called for the behavioral and social sciences to be integrated into the plans for a new health-focused agency—an outcome that would provide ground-shifting opportunities to leverage behavioral science to improve health.

[As previously reported by APS](#), U.S. President Biden, his Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), NIH, and Congress have discussed throughout this year plans to develop an Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health, or ARPA-H for short, designed to accomplish moonshot-type goals addressing a variety of public health threats such as Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes, and more. Recognizing the importance of psychological science and other behavioral science fields in preventing and addressing poor health and disease generally, APS and other leading groups have urged OSTP and NIH to ensure that behavioral science will be represented at the agency.

“The importance of behavioral and social factors in health merits that they be integral components of ARPA-H, particularly because transformative breakthroughs in these areas offer opportunities for driving dramatic improvements in human health,” reads the September 29, 2021 letter, sent by APS, the American Psychological Association, and the Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences.

“Just as the U.S.’s first moon landing required an interplay among all scientific fields, behavioral and social sciences included, for success, the moonshot projects launched by ARPA-H will only achieve our shared goals with full participation of these fields,” the letter continues.

The letter specifically encourages that the proposed ARPA-H agency fund behavioral science projects, integrate the behavioral sciences throughout its operations, and hire project managers or other program officials with expertise in the behavioral and social sciences.

[Read the letter from the behavioral science community to OSTP and NIH by clicking here.](#)

APS will keep members apprised of further developments regarding ARPA-H in [the *Observer* magazine](#) and on www.psychologicalscience.org/policy.

Further reading:

Collins, F. C., Schwetz, T. A., Tabak, L. A., & Lander, E. S. (2021). ARPA-H: Accelerating biomedical breakthroughs. *Science*, 373(6551), 165-167. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abj8547>