Guide to Document Preparation and Procedures

National Institutes of Health   Executive Secretariat

National Institutes of Health
Office of the Director, Executive Secretariat

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Section 1: NIH Executive Secretariat

Introduction to this Guide

This guide outlines the standards and guidelines for written materials managed by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Executive Secretariat (referred to as NIH Exec Sec in this document) on behalf of the Director and Principal Deputy Director. The document has six sections (to get to each section, right click and hit control the blue links below):

- Section 1 provides an overview of the NIH Exec Sec office and its functions.
- Section 2 summarizes the guidelines and procedures for correspondence.
- Section 3 summarizes the guidelines and procedures for memoranda.
- Section 4 outlines the NIH Exec Sec Style Guide.
- Section 5 discusses procedures related to clearances.
- Section 6 provides an overview of the NIH Director's meeting and invitation procedures.
- The Appendices include sample templates for correspondence and memorandums.

The guide serves as a resource for staff in the NIH's Institutes and Centers and the Office of the Director (referred to as "ICOs" in this document) when working with NIH Exec Sec on official correspondence, memoranda, clearance actions, meeting materials, and invitations to the Director. This guide is not meant to be comprehensive or exhaustive; rather, it provides general guidelines on the most common types of work NIH Exec Sec handles. Please contact our office with specific questions or requests for clarification.

What is NIH Exec Sec?

Mission

NIH Exec Sec is located in the Immediate Office of the Director (OD) and serves the NIH [Director](#) and [Principal Deputy Director](#), supporting their responsiveness, decision-making, meeting participation, and official records.

Objective

The objective of the NIH Exec Sec is to manage, analyze, integrate and preserve information to and from the NIH Director and Principal Deputy Director, and to ensure that their correspondence, emails, memoranda, other communications, and documents requiring clearance and approval are delivered efficiently and accurately. Serving as an honest broker in adjudicating differences in organizational perspectives, NIH Exec Sec works to maintain integrity, accountability, confidentiality, transparency, and resiliency to support the NIH mission. In addition, NIH Exec Sec ensures assignments from the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS) are completed and comprehensively reviewed in a through, accurate, and timely manner.

Vision

To expertly share and integrate current information and using best practices to serve NIH leadership. This work is often accomplished in collaboration with a network of liaisons in NIH's ICOs. We strive to provide outstanding, seamless support to NIH senior leadership and to connect, guide, teach, inspire, and set innovative standards that support the NIH mission.

Who is NIH Exec Sec?

NIH Exec Sec is composed of four working groups:
- Executive Services
- Policy Analysis
- Archives and Records Management
- Administration.

Each supports the Office of the Director by either analyzing, preserving, or integrating information to and from the NIH Director and Principal Deputy Director.

The NIH Exec Sec team is organized into three divisions led by the Executive Secretariat Director, Deputy Director, and Supervisory Management and Program Analyst. Executive Services Policy Analysts (referred to as "PAs" in this document) are under the purview of the Deputy Director. Each PA manages a discreet portfolio of ICOs and is responsible for coordinating the correspondence, clearance, and other assignments related to their assigned ICOs. The Archives and Records Management team, led by the Supervisory Management and Program Analyst, are responsible for the storage, preservation, and retrieval of NIH records. If you have questions, please contact your ICO's ES PA. A list of ES PAs and their ICO portfolios can be found here.

Contact Us

You can contact the NIH Exec Sec by email at:

To submit or forward general public correspondence the general Exec Sec public mailbox, email NIHExecSec@nih.gov (note, this mailbox is only checked once per day and should not be used to contact Exec Sec Staff).

To submit an invitation for the NIH Director, please send to NIHDirectorInvitations@nih.gov.

To submit materials for a meeting with the NIH Director, please send to NIHDirectorMeetings@nih.gov.

Or contact by Phone: Main Phone: 301-496-1461 / Fax: 301-496-8276

Or at the following address:

> Executive Secretariat
> Office of the Director,
> National Institutes of Health
> Shannon Building (Building 1), Room B1-42
> One Center Drive, MSC 0122
> Bethesda, Maryland 20892-0122

What does NIH Exec Sec do?

NIH Exec Sec manages all written communication to and from the NIH Director and Principal Deputy Director. Exec Sec screens, assigns for information or action, and maintains official records of correspondence involving:

- Congress
- The White House and Executive Office of the President
- The public
- Academia
- International heads of state and their representatives
- The Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Services (referred to as "OS")
- Sister HHS agencies
- Other government agencies
- NIH staff

NIH Exec Sec ensures that the NIH Director and Principal Deputy Director have the benefit of the points of view from all relevant parts of NIH before signing documents that establish or affect NIH policy. Exec Sec serves as a key information resource for ICO staff. NIH Exec Sec ensures that the NIH Principal Deputy Director reviews and clears documents for the Director's signature prior to the Director's approval or signature.

In addition, NIH Exec Sec manages all congressional mail received by the ICOs regarding any NIH business. If an ICO receives congressional mail, it should be forwarded directly to NIH Exec Sec (see Section 2 for more details). NIH Exec Sec will determine the appropriate assignment and keep a record of the correspondence.

Information Management Continuum

NIH Exec Sec ensures that correspondence addressed to the NIH Director and Principal Deputy Director receives the appropriate response. When the appropriate response is a document for signature by the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director, or is a significant response to be signed by an ICO Director, NIH Exec Sec ensures the accuracy and quality of that response by coordinating substantive review and clearance of the document by all involved NIH components and editorial review within NIH Exec Sec. After the response has been sent, NIH Exec Sec continues to manage the record of all documents signed by the Director and Principal Deputy Director and other important documents for the documents' complete life cycle.

NIH Exec Sec also coordinates the substantive review and clearance of some correspondence assigned to an ICO for signature. This class of correspondence usually involves multiple ICOs or a sensitive and/or "hot" issue. If the correspondence is ultimately signed within an ICO, that ICO must maintain the files for the permanent record (see Section 2).

Records Management

NIH Exec Sec manages the documents described above by adhering to records management requirements as set forth by the NIH Records Management Officer, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). However, each ICO office must maintain records for correspondence signed by principals in their ICO. To ensure you are adhering with recordkeeping requirements, please contact your ICO Records Management Officer.

NIH Director's Meeting Materials

NIH Exec Sec coordinates the preparation of briefing materials for a large portion of the NIH Director's meetings. Exec Sec assigns, collects, and coordinates meeting materials to ensure that the NIH Director is fully prepared for meetings with NIH staff, OS staff, staff from other federal agencies, Members of Congress and their staffs, and public and professional organizations and constituencies. See Section 6 for further information and guidance.

NIH Director's Speeches

The Office of Communications & Public Liaison (OCPL) Speeches Team coordinates the preparation of speeches for the NIH Director and the Principal Deputy Director. OCPL may assign a lead ICO to prepare talking points, briefing/background information, and/or slides that OCPL staff uses to draft speeches. OCPL coordinates with NIH Exec Sec to identify a lead for preparing remarks/talking points and other briefing materials needed when they are not the point of contact for an event.

Legislatively Mandated Reports to Congress

NIH Exec Sec tracks, edits, reviews, clears, and submits—to Congress or to the Assistant Secretary for Legislation for transmittal—all NIH congressional reports except those required by Appropriations Committees. Appropriations Reports to Congress are coordinated by the Office of Legislative Policy and Analysis (OLPA), which works with NIH Exec Sec to get the final version approved and signed by the NIH Director. See Section 2 for more information.

HHS Weekly Reports

Each week, NIH Exec Sec sends out requests for information for the HHS Weekly Report, which contains information on NIH policy developments, key events, regulations and sub-regulatory guidance, Federal Register notices, reports to Congress, public meetings and presentations, or issues that may spur congressional or significant public and media interest. NIH Exec Sec develops the report based on submissions from OD offices, determines which topics to include, and clears these reports with OD leadership and submits these reports to HHS. The reports are shared with the Secretary's Policy Team, among other Departmental leaders. Exec Sec also uses its information resources to propose and develop the agenda for bi-weekly meetings, with the HHS Policy Team and Counselor to the Secretary, where critical topics and the report items are discussed.

Workflow

As mentioned earlier, Exec Sec facilitates the flow of information from many public and private sources daily (see Section 2 for more information on correspondence). A brief description of the office's most common workflow is included in Appendix 9.

What is the SAAVI System?

Background

The [Synthesize, Analyze, Adjudicate, and Vet Information (SAAVI)](#) system (formally known as the Director's Document and Records Management System or DDRMS) is a web-based application that is used to assign and control actions electronically to ICOs. It is also the system of record for all NIH Director and Principal Deputy Directors records. ICOs use SAAVI to submit, approve, and clear response documents and return them to NIH Exec Sec.
SAAVI is an NIH-created system developed and managed by CIT. NIH Exec Sec is the SAAVI business owner. Some ICOs have a proprietary use of SAAVI for management of their internal documents and to assign materials to ICOs.

Features of SAAVI include:
- SAAVI works on PC, Mac, or iPad/tablet devices connected to the NIH VPN.
- SAAVI allows secure web access through standard Web browsers, including Chrome and Microsoft Edge.
- SAAVI's web-based processing interface gives authorized users PIV card enabled access to the system via any NIH computer.
- SAAVI provides broad search and retrieval capabilities for all system users, coupled with the ability for NIH Exec Sec to limit access for confidential actions
- SAAVI offers extended use capabilities providing ICOs the ability to leverage what has already been developed for internal correspondence and routing. This feature minimizes the cost of developing correspondence systems at NIH.

If your ICO is interested in obtaining SAAVI as system for its internal controlled correspondence or for other types of document management purposes, please contact Leslie Twyman, Supervisory Management and Program Analyst, for further information.

Requesting a SAAVI Account

Each ICO has two types of accounts in SAAVI; the "ES Liaison" account and the "Reviewer" account. An ES Liaison is the person who triages the incoming assignments for their ICO, while the Reviewer is the senior-level official who is responsible for approving any comments or documents being submitted to NIH Exec Sec and is also able to clear documents for their ICO.
To request SAAVI access for a new user (ES Liaison or Reviewer) in your ICO, please submit a NIH IT Service Desk ticket. Please note that Reviewer access to SAAVI must be approved by the head of your ICO. A ticket can be created by calling the NIH IT Service Desk at 301-496-4357, or following the directions below to submit a ticket online:
1. Go to the [IT Service Desk portal](#).
2. Select Request a Service
3. NIH Enterprise Applications (choose "SAAVI)
4. Enter in the Short Description field "New SAAVI Account Request"
5. Enter in the Description field "Add [User First & Last Name] to the SAAVI as a [Specify – Liaison and/or Reviewer] for [ICO name]."
6. Enter selection of PC or Mac.

7. Click the [Submit] button

Learning to Use SAAVI

Training is available on a monthly basis for all new and existing SAAVI users. If you are interested in attending a training session, please go to the Learning Management System (LMS) to sign-up for the training session ("SAAVI Training for ES Liaisons"). There are also weekly "Office Hours" with SAAVI technical support for any specific questions. Please contact your ES PA for more information.

SAAVI Suggestions

We welcome your ideas for improvements to SAAVI. Please send any suggestions you may have to SAAVISuggestions@nih.gov, and it will be considered for implementation in a future release.

Section 2: How does NIH manage Correspondence?

Types of Correspondence

NIH Exec Sec controls and keeps records of correspondence and documents to and from the NIH Director and NIH Principal Deputy Director. We receive correspondence from a variety of sources, including hard copy mail and email sent to the NIH Director, NIH Principal Deputy Director, and the NIH Executive Secretariat mailbox. NIH Exec Sec also receives correspondence forwarded from OLPA, HHS, and the White House. If a piece of correspondence requires a response or needs to be shared with others at NIH, the NIH Exec Sec will make an assignment through SAAVI to the appropriate ICOs.

Types of Assignments

Below is a brief overview of the types of assignments your ICO may receive via SAAVI. These assignments may be related to correspondence, memoranda (see Section 4), policy documents, NIH Director Invitations (see Section 6), or other assignments. When reviewing assignments in SAAVI, always review the "Remarks" for specific instructions from NIH Exec Sec and the due date. If an ICO believes an assignment is incorrect, it is the ICO's responsibility to recommend a different assignment (different signature level or assigned lead) within 48 hours of receiving the assignment.

Type	Description
For Director's Signature *(DIR SIG)* **Deputy Director's Signature** *(DEPD SIG)* **Secretary's Signature** *(SEC SIG)* **Or Other's Signature** *(OTHER SIG)*	Request to create a response that will be signed by someone outside your ICO. The SAAVI assignment, along with the comments in the Remarks section, will indicate who is to sign the letter (usually the NIH Director, Principal Deputy Director, or HHS Secretary). These assignments often have short turnaround deadlines. When the draft is complete, upload it in SAAVI and forward to NIH Exec Sec. NIH Exec Sec normally will send draft responses out for further clearance in SAAVI and, depending upon comments, may return it to your ICO for revision. The most common types of requests are: • *Director's Signature (DIR SIG) or Deputy Director's Signature (DEPD SIG):* Prepare a reply for signature by the NIH Director or NIH Principal Deputy Director. • *Secretary's signature (SEC SIG):* Prepare a reply for the signature by the HHS Secretary. NIH Exec Sec will

	manage the clearance of the letter and obtain the Principal Deputy Director's approval of the draft. NIH Exec Sec will then send the draft to HHS for further clearance, approval, and signature.
	• *Other (OTHER SIG)* Prepare a reply for signature by another party (occasionally this is used for White House correspondence, or correspondence that may be signed by another senior leader).
For Direct Reply (D/R)	Request to write a response for the signature of your ICO Director or an approved designee within your ICO. Once the reply is complete, a signed and dated copy, or a copy of the sent email, is sent to NIH Exec Sec via SAAVI by the due date requested. NOTE: If the response is a Congressional, IC offices must clear their proposed response with their legislative office, and OD Offices must clear their proposed response with OLPA, prior to mailing. OLPA will receive an info copy of all Congressional assignments.
For Direct Reply with Clearance (D/R w/Clearance)	Request to write a response for the signature of your ICO Director or an approved designee within your ICO, but DO NOT date, sign, or mail until you have sent the draft to NIH Exec Sec for clearance in SAAVI and received approval to send it out. NIH Exec Sec will review the draft and clear with the appropriate offices and leadership. NIH Exec Sec may return it to your ICO for revision and re-clearance before you can date and mail it. Once the reply is complete, you should submit a signed and dated copy to NIH Exec Sec via SAAVI by the due date requested. Always read the instructions in its entirety in the Remarks section of your SAAVI assignment.
For Clearance	Request for your ICO to review a draft document prepared by another organization, to ensure that it is factually correct and in accord with NIH policy. This includes correspondence, memoranda (see Section 4 for more info), and other policy documents. Once your ICO's reviewer has reviewed in SAAVI, return the response to NIH Exec Sec via SAAVI. When clearing, you have the following response options: • *Concur*: your ICO has no significant objections to the content, grammar, format, or any other part of the document you've been asked to review and clear.

	• *Concur with Comments*: your ICO approves the document, but you have changes to suggest or comments to make. If the preparing office makes the changes you propose or addresses your comments, then NIH Exec Sec will not need to send it back to you for re-clearance. When we get the revision by the preparing office, if it is unclear if they made the changes you requested, or we think they haven't addressed your comments sufficiently, we will send it back to you for a second clearance. • *Non-concur*: your ICO has major objections to the document you are reviewing and, in your opinion, it can't go forward without substantive changes. You must submit your reasons for non-concurring and/or your comments on the clearance document(s) and identify a point-of-contact in your ICO. Please ensure that your comments are substantial and serious enough to warrant a non-concur vs. a concur with comments. NIH tries to limit the number of non-concurs and only uses this function for serious policy disputes. *The NIH Principal Deputy Director personally reviews all HHS non-concurs and makes the final decision on our clearance submission*. Once we have a revised product, we will send it to you for a second clearance, and you may concur, concur with comments, or, if necessary, non-concur again. • *No Opinion*: the document you have been asked to clear is not relevant to the mission of your ICO and does not need your input/advice. "No opinion" responses should be rare because NIH Exec Sec will send the document to you for review only when there is a valid reason to do so, e.g., budget figures for your ICO cited in a table. In the interest of the NIH Exec Sec not sending you similar clearance requests, please explain why the topic of the document is not relevant to your ICO. Once your ICO has reviewed and determined one of these four clearance choices, it is approved by your ICO reviewer and sent back to NIH Exec Sec in SAAVI.
Necessary Action without a Due Date (N/A)	This assignment does not require a written reply and any action taken is at the discretion of your ICO; i.e. forward copies to any subject matter experts. NIH Exec Sec will explain the assignment in "Remarks," unless the action is obvious in the incoming document. In some cases, NIH Exec Sec will ask the ICO to recommend if the incoming correspondence requires a response. If not, Exec Sec will close the assignment can be after the ICO's action. The

	ICO is responsible for keeping a record of how the assignment is handled and submitting a statement in the remarks section indicating how it was handled. On occasion ICOs may be assigned to take a particular action without a specific due date (for example, requesting that you upload a specific document when it becomes available) and may be required to upload a document to close out the folder.
Necessary Action with a Due Date	This assignment does not necessarily require a *written* reply, however, it does require that the ICO take an appropriate action. NIH Exec Sec expects the ICO to take action and to provide a record of that action in SAAVI by the due date. NIH Exec Sec will provide instructions in the "Remarks" explaining what action may need to be taken. If your ICO determines that a response is required, forward a copy of the signed and dated document to NIH Exec Sec via SAAVI.
For-Your-Information (FYI)	FYI means no action or response is required; however, an FYI document may contain both important and/or urgent information. When an ICO has an interest in the subject matter and is not assigned the response, an FYI copy of the correspondence is provided. In the remarks section of the assignment, other ICOs may also be listed as receiving information copies.
Rewrite	Rewrite signifies that clearance has been completed on the draft response, and NIH Exec Sec is requesting that your ICO revise the response to address the comments. Please adjudicate the comments and sent back a redline and clean version of the new draft.
Invitation Vetting	Invitation is sent to your ICO asking you to advise if the NIH Director, Principal Deputy Director, or HHS Secretary should accept or decline an invitation, and why. See Section 6 for more information on the NIH Director's invitations. Requests to identify a surrogate also may be included.

Special Correspondence

NIH Exec Sec also manages a variety of special types of correspondence:

Federal Register Notices

NIH Exec Sec processes notices for publication in the Federal Register that are signed by the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director. For more information on Federal Register Notices, please contact the Office of Management Assessment.

Gift Acceptance Letters

NIH occasionally receives letters containing checks designated for specific ICO program areas, or for the NIH in general.

NIH Manual 1135, which outlines the NIH policy on Gifts Administration, distinguishes between conditional and unconditional gifts, and provides information on who is allowed to accept gifts to NIH. IC Directors are authorized to accept conditional and unconditional gifts designated for their particular ICs or IC programs. The NIH Principal Deputy Director is authorized to accept conditional and unconditional gifts to NIH in general or to specific OD program areas.

Assignments from ES and Gift Check Processing

When necessary, the NIH Exec Sec will make an assignment in SAAVI for an IC to prepare an acceptance letter for Direct Reply from the IC (i.e., to be signed by the IC Director or another designee). Or, if appropriate, the NIH Exec Sec may ask an ICO to prepare an acceptance letter to be signed by the NIH Director or NIH Principal Deputy Director.

The NIH Manual 1135 provides sample acceptance letters, a transmittal form to submit gift checks to the Cashier's office (NIH Form 2914), and a gift acceptance checklist. Please note, all checks, along with the completed NIH Form 2914, are required to be hand carried to the building 10 cashier's office within 24 hours of receipt. If you have any questions on this process, please contact your ES PA or the Office of Management's Office of Financial Management.

Transmittals for Advisory Board and Council Resolutions

In some circumstances, NIH Exec Sec handles transmittal letters for Advisory Boards and Council Resolutions for the NIH Director's approval and signature. NIH Exec Sec may also prepare and transmit invitations to Advisory Boards and Councils. If you have specific questions, please contact your ES PA or the Office of Federal Advisory Committee Policy.

Presidential Proclamations

NIH receives requests from the White House (via HHS) to draft text for a variety of presidential proclamations, such as the National Trauma Awareness Month or National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. NIH Exec Sec will send these requests to the appropriate ICO as a "Necessary Action assignment with a due date. The Remarks section will include instructions regarding the preparation of the presidential proclamation. In addition to the necessary ICOs, all proclamations (including Rewrites) must be cleared with the Office of Communications and Public Liaison. See this link for the HHS memo on White House Proclamations, dated March 10, 2014.

If you are preparing a presidential proclamation, keep the following points in mind:

- Always prepare a Presidential Proclamation as a double-spaced draft.
- In addition to the draft proclamation, a table including the drafter's name and contact information, as well as approver information should be provided. Include a Key Initiatives and Resources document to provide talking points, citations, or information on related policies or programs relevant to the proclamation.
- Be sure to keep complete files on previous presidential proclamations. Most proclamations must be prepared each year; having background information for reference is very helpful, especially to avoid identical wording from year to year. *The information provided should be substantially different from previous years.*
- The final three paragraphs of any proclamation must include some specific wording. The third paragraph from the end include a statement of the congressional action establishing the event that the proclamation references. The second paragraph from the end contains the following as its first sentence:

"Now, therefore, I, [President's name], President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim [month and year] as [name designated]."

And the final paragraph states the following:

"In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this [ordinal number] day of [month], in the year of our lord [year spelled out; for example, two thousand and three], and of the Independence of the United States of America the [ordinal number of complete years since July 4, 1776, spelled out; for a date after July 4 2005, for example, two hundred and twenty-ninth]."

Secretarial Correspondence

NIH may be asked by HHS to draft a letter for signature by the HHS Secretary (known as a "Sec Sig"). In those instances, we must adhere to the guidelines established in the HHS Office of the Secretary 2018 Guide to Document Preparation, which can be found here. This guidance provides information related specifically to the policy and procedures

related to documents for the Secretary's approval or signature. Please reference this guide when working with Secretarial documents, and please contact your ES PA for further information and/or guidance.

White House Correspondence

Occasionally, NIH receives correspondence addressed to the White House and must prepare a reply for signature by the President, Vice President, or other White House official. In such cases, prepare the reply, which will always be a letter, following our standard guidelines. In addition, clearly label the document as a draft, with no signer's name following the complimentary close, Sincerely.

Draft letters for signature by White House officials also require an accompanying memorandum transmitting the draft letter to the White House. Unless you receive other specific instructions, type the memorandum on Office of the Secretary letterhead; the Executive Secretary of the Department will sign the transmittal. Contact your ES PA for further instructions.

NIH also receives letters addressed to the White House for which a Direct Reply is to be signed by the appropriate ICO Director. Any specific directions will be included in the "Remark" section in SAAVI. After signing, dating, and mailing the original, upload the final response to your ICO subfolder in SAAVI.

Invitations to the Secretary and to the White House

Rarely, NIH may wish to send an invitation to the White House, to be signed by the NIH Director. In these situations, please prepare a background memo regarding the request and a draft letter for the NIH Director's signature. Please contact your ES PA for further information.

Campaign Mail

NIH often receives campaign mailings from various stakeholder groups. If your ICO receives more than 10 letters from a campaign, please contact your ES PA for further information on how to handle.

Due Dates

NIH Exec Sec assigns tasks to the ICOs based on standard guidelines for correspondence, outlined below. **Please note that NIH Exec Sec reserves the right to alter deadlines** based on an expedited clearance request, leadership schedules, leadership interest in a particular piece of correspondence, or other factors to ensure that NIH is able to meet its external deadlines. Please contact your ES PA if you have any questions about the deadlines.

Assignment Type	Number of Business Days for Action
Director's Signature or Deputy Director's Signature (Response Creation) **-** *Stakeholder or Congressional*	• Up to 5 business days for ICO to prepare a response for clearance. • 10 business days from receipt of letter to response sent.
Direct Reply with required Office of the Director Clearance (including Congressional Letters)	• Up to 5 business days for ICO to prepare a response for clearance. • 10 business days from receipt of letter to response sent.
Director's Signature or Deputy Director's Signature (Response Creation) - *General/Non-Urgent*	• Up to 10 business days for ICO to prepare response. • Up to 15 business days from receipt of letter to response sent.
Direct Reply	• Up to 10 business days for ICO to prepare and send response.
Direct Reply, Congressional Letter	• Up to 5 business days for ICO to prepare and send response.
Clearance of Correspondence Documents	• Up to 2 business days allowed for each round of ICO clearance (may be longer or shorter depending on several factors).

Due Dates for HHS and Other Clearances

HHS establishes their own deadlines for Sec Sig, Direct Reply with HHS Clearance, and HHS Correspondence Clearance assignments. Please see the HHS 2018 guide here for specific deadline timelines. NIH Exec Sec will establish the internal NIH deadlines based on the need for review by the appropriate ICOs and leadership clearance prior to submission to HHS.

Extensions

Please make every effort to meet the due dates assigned. When planning your work, be sure to allow time for any necessary reviews within your organization. If you believe you cannot meet a

due date, you may use the ES Request feature in SAAVI to request an extension. Please request an extension ASAP after receiving an assignment and do not wait to request an extension until the due date.

Please note that the Office of the Secretary will not grant extension to the due dates, however, we may notify HHS that we will not be able to meet their deadline, if appropriate.

Reassignment Requests

Occasionally, an ICO may receive an assignment that they feel should be reassigned to a different ICO. In these instances, the ICO may submit a reassignment request in SAAVI requesting reassignment (it is the ICO's responsibility to request all reassignments). **Please note, reassignments for correspondence should be requested no more than 48 hours after receiving the assignment (with an explanation), otherwise it may be denied; do not wait until the assignment due date to request reassignment.** If you wait until the assignment due date to request reassignment, your ICO must send an interim response.

Submitting Documents for the NIH Director or Deputy Director to Sign

Submitting a Letter for the NIH Director or Deputy Director to Sign

Occasionally, an ICO may request that the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director sign a piece of correspondence drafted by that ICO (and not in response to an external piece of correspondence). Examples include a letter from the NIH Director inviting someone to speak at NIH, a cover letter from the NIH Director at the beginning of a report, or a letter thanking someone for visiting campus. This is different from submitting a memo for the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director's review and signature (see Section 3 for more information on that process).

All correspondence must route through NIH Exec Sec for editing, review, and clearance. To submit a request, your ICO must submit the package, containing all necessary documents, in SAAVI through the "Create a Workfolder" function. Note, NIH Exec Sec prefers that all packages be submitted through SAAVI. If there are circumstances that prevent your ICO from doing so, please contact your ES PA. When submitting a package, please follow these guidelines:

> **Submit the draft correspondence for signature in Word** (PDFs will NOT be accepted), in the proper format (see section below for formatting)**.** If you submit a letter that requires substantial reformatting, NIH Exec Sec reserves the right to return the letter to the ICO for reformatting.
>
> **Submit the names and addresses of recipients if there are multiple letters (i.e. the same letter but addressed to a large list of people).** Include the names and addresses in an Excel sheet to allow for a mail merge after the template letter is approved.
>
> Note: If the draft letter is to be sent via email from the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director's email, you must also include an Excel with all of the names and email addresses in the proper SG format. Please work closely with your ES PA on this process, as it may require additional processing time.
>
> **Submit a memo or note from your ICO Director requesting the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director's signature.** This note *must* also include background on why the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director should sign the correspondence. NIH Exec Sec will not process a package without this background information.

Timeline

When submitting a piece of correspondence from your ICO for the NIH Director or Deputy Director's signature, you should submit the package to NIH Exec Sec a *minimum* of 5 business days before you require the signed correspondence. This provides enough time for review,

clearance, and editing of your draft. It is your ICO's responsibility to ensure that the package is provided to NIH Exec Sec within that timeframe; *NIH Exec Sec will not rush a package if your ICO fails to plan adequately*. If you are requesting an expedited package, you must contact your ES PA with an explanation as soon as possible.

Retirement Letters

The NIH Director will often sign letters congratulating employees on their retirement. NIH Exec Sec works with the Office of Human Resources (OHR) to coordinate the preparation and signature of retirement letters through a central process. OHR is responsible for providing NIH Exec Sec with a list of retiring personnel and drafting the letters for the NIH Director's signature review. The NIH Director approves having OHR draft the letters and sign them using the autopen or electronic signature, but may request to sign some of the letters personally. NIH Exec Sec, in conjunction with OHR, obtains the NIH Director's signature on the letters, and OHR transmits them to the retirees via mail or e-mail, as appropriate. If your ICO would like to obtain a letter signed by the NIH Director for a retiring employee, please contact OHR directly for guidance: AskBenefits@nih.gov or (301) 496-2404.

Certificates

ICOs may request the NIH Director's signature on certain certificates, such as certificates for participating in a conference, etc. ICOs may request signature of a specific set of certificates, or a blanket approval for certificates that happen on a continuing basis (for example, certificates that are signed every year). In order to request approval for certificates to be signed, ICOs are required to provide NIH Exec Sec with an example certificate, the list of personnel to be recognized, an autopen request, and any supplemental program information. After the materials are approved, NIH Exec Sec works with the ICO to schedule an autopen appointment for the program staff to autopen the NIH Director's signature by authority of standing authorizations from the NIH Director, or will work with them to obtain electronic signature. The certificates must be reviewed and approved by NIH Exec Sec prior to autopen signature. If your office would like a certificate signed by the NIH Director, please contact NIH Exec Sec at 301-496-146 to initiate the process.

Letters for Signature by the HHS Secretary or other HHS Officials

Very rarely, an ICO may wish to request that the HHS Secretary or another HHS official sign a piece of correspondence drafted by NIH (note, this is different from a decision memo, outlined in Section 4). If you anticipate your ICO will need to make such a request, please contact your ES PA as soon as possible for further guidance. These requests generally are prepared as a decision memo to the HHS Secretary requesting signature and may take additional time to process (generally a 3 – 4 week timeline). The format for correspondence to be signed by the Secretary can be found in Appendix 2 – Secretary Correspondence Template.

Formatting NIH Correspondence

This section outlines the format for all correspondence to be signed by the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director. Please review all correspondence to ensure it follows these guidelines before submitting to NIH Exec Sec. An example correspondence draft can be found in the Appendix 1 – Template Correspondence. For email correspondence, please see the format at the end of this section.

Font

Use Times New Roman, 12-point font, unless it is necessary to make a letter fit on one page. In that case, use 11.5 font size. No other font will be accepted.

Spacing

Leave one blank line between the salutation and the first line of the letter. Use two spaces between sentences. Use single spacing between lines for all letters, even very short ones. Leave one blank line between the last line of the letter and the complimentary closing.

Margins

Set top and bottom margins to one inch. Do not justify the right margin. Only adjust the margins if the text isn't properly fitting on the page.

Date

After leaving a one-inch margin at the top of the page, space down approximately six lines before typing (or six lines from the bottom of the letterhead). The date should be left aligned.

If you know the exact date the letter will be signed, type the date and then space down twice before typing in the address block.

If you do not know the exact date it will be signed, do not date the letter when preparing it (but leave space for it). The date will be typed in later.

Address

The address block begins at the left margin; if any part must continue to a second line, indent the additional line two spaces. For example:

> Jane Doe, Ph.D.
> Assistant Professor
> Department of Microbiology and
>   Infectious Diseases
> University of Maryland
> 123 Main Street, Room 777
> College Park, Maryland 20742-0000

Type in the addressee's full name, followed by any degree the addressee holds. For example, use *Martin D. Smith, M.D., (not* Dr. Martin D. Smith, Jr. or Dr. Martin D. Smith, Jr., M.D.). Type in the addressee's title, if any, on the second line (for example, first line would be Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., second line would be Director, third line would be affiliation).

The addressee's affiliation goes on the next line, progressing on separate lines from the smallest to the largest unit, for example:

> Jane Smith, M.D.
> Assistant Professor
> Department of Microbiology
> University of Maryland

Enter as complete a postal address as possible. If you include a suite or room number, place it either on the same line as the street address or on the line above. Spell out the state name as well as the street name, except for DC. Following the state name, space twice and then type in the zip code (use the nine-digit code if you know it). If the letter is going to a foreign address, add the country name, in all caps, as the last line of the address block.

See the section below for the correct address block formats for U.S. and foreign governmental officials and a variety of other categories of addresses.

For both external and internal formal correspondence, always use the full name and title for each person. If you use the formal name and title for one person referenced, all other names should also include the full name and title.

Letters to be Emailed

Occasionally, a letter may be signed in hard copy and emailed, with no address information available. For these situations, include as much information as available (full title, affiliation, etc.) and include a line indicating the letter is to be emailed above the address line:

[To be transmitted via email to Jane.Doe@UofMaryland.edu]

Jane Doe, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Microbiology and
    Infectious Diseases
University of Maryland

Reference Line

For a letter concerning a legal case, patient records, or some other matter identified by a unique number, include a reference line following the address before the salutation. Enter the reference line, leaving one blank line above and below:

J. Peter Doe, M.D., Ph.D.
Professor and Chairman
Department of Internal Medicine
Albert Einstein College of Medicine
3301 Bainbridge Avenue
Bronx, New York 10467-0000

Re: Patient No. XX-1234

Dear Dr. Doe:

Salutation

Following the last line of the address block or, if one is included, the reference line, leave one blank line, and then type in the salutation, beginning at the left margin and ending with a colon. Unless you receive other specific instructions, always enter the salutation as Dear Dr. Franklin or Dear Mr. Simpson (not "Dear Jane:" or "Dear Frank"). If the person who signs the letter prefers, he or she can draw a line through the formal name and write in the addressee's first name.

Be sure the honorific in the salutation is consistent with the address block above. If the letter is addressed to Jane Smith, M.D., Ph.D., or Jane Smith, D.D.S., type in the salutation as "Dear Dr. Smith." If it is addressed to Jeannette Brown or Jeannette Brown, R.N., or Edward Hall, type the salutation as "Dear Ms. Brown" or "Dear Mr. Hall."

For special salutations used when writing to U.S. and state government officials, see the guidance at the end of this section.

Body of the Letter

Leave one blank line following the salutation and start the body of the letter on the next line. Begin all paragraphs at the left margin and do not justify the right margin. Leave one blank line

between paragraphs. If necessary, as a reference aid, use subparagraphs or headings and subheadings.

Always end your letter with a closing paragraph that ties the information together but does not introduce new information or conclusions.

Complimentary close and signature block.

Leave one blank line between the last line of the body of the letter and the complimentary close. Leave three blank lines between the complimentary close and the first line of the signature block. Begin both the complimentary close and the signature block six tabs into the center of the page, aligning with the beginning of the signer's name and title with the complimentary close as shown below.

<div style="text-align:center">Sincerely,</div>

<div style="text-align:center">Jane Doe, M.D., Ph.D.
Associate Director for Research
 on Women's Health</div>

Break long titles into two lines and indent the second line two additional spaces. If a letter will have two signers, enter one signature at the left margin, the other aligned at the center of the page.

Use *Sincerely* or *Sincerely yours* for the complimentary close (also known as the valediction), depending on the preference of the person who will sign the letter. Signature blocks of officials can be found on the ES website here.

For the letter to be signed by someone officially designed as an acting in a position, enter that person's name and add "Acting" at the beginning of the title. Someone authorized to sign for another official will sign his or her own name and write *for* in front of the name of the person not actually signing.

Multipage Letters

In a letter of more than one page, do not start a paragraph near the bottom of a page unless you have room for a least the first two lines of the paragraph and the paragraph will continue for at least two more lines on the next page. Use plain white paper (not NIH or other letterhead) for the second and following pages of the letter.

Headers

Include a header, identifying the page number and addressee on the second page and any following pages of a multipage letter. Enter the header, as shown in the example in Appendix 1 – Template Correspondence, so that the person's name ends against the right margin.

Set the header (mark the first page as different, as it contains the letterhead) to repeat on the additional pages (add the header into the letter margin, not manually). By using a header setting, you can be sure the header will appear in the correct position on each page regardless of how the letter may be edited or rewritten.

Enclosures (for letters)

Place information about enclosures beginning two lines below the last line of the signature block (one blank line between). (Letters have enclosures; memos have attachments.)

For an enclosure or enclosures identified in the body of the letter, just enter Enclosure or Enclosures at the left margin.

If the material is not identified in the body of the letter, add a colon, and, beginning on the next line, list the material, giving a title or short description. Do not extend the identification beyond the middle of the page; indent any runover line two spaces from the left margin. When listing more than one enclosure, begin the title or description of each on a new line at the left margin.

If the material mentioned in a letter is being sent separately, or "under separate cover," enter *Separate Cover* at the left margin, two lines below the signature block or enclosure information (leaving one blank line), and describe the material on the next line, beginning at the left margin—unless the letter is for signature by an official outside the NIH. On a letter to be signed by a non-NIH official, state in the letter that the material will be sent separately but do not include a separate cover note at the bottom of the page. Include a copy of the letter in the envelope or package of material sent under separate cover.

The enclosure documents should follow a similar format and style to the letter format, and should include a title on the top of the document as well as page numbers, if appropriate.

Courtesy Copies

Show any distribution of information copies with a courtesy copy (cc) notation at the bottom of the memo. Leave one blank line below the signature block, enclosure listing, or separate cover listing, and enter cc: at the left margin. Beginning at the left margin on the next line, identify each addressee on a separate line. The name should be listed as an official title – David M. David M. Jones, Ph.D., M.D., Director (not Dr. Jones).

Email Correspondence Format

Occasionally, your ICO may be asked to draft an email for the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director to send. Instructions will be included in the "Remarks" section in SAAVI. For email, the format should be 11pt Calibri font, and only use a single space after a period. Please see template page on the ES website for the specific email correspondence template. For any questions on email format, please contact your ES PA.

Example Correspondence Template

On the following page is a simple example template with specific formatting highlighted for your reference. More complex templates with variations can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES   Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

> Indent .4 here (not two spaces).

> Space down six lines before typing date; date should be left aligned.

> Margins are 1 inch.

> Use Time News Roman 12 Point Font throughout. Use Single Line spacing.
>
> Use two spaces between sentences.
>
> Use single spacing between lines.

January 1, 2020

Jane Doe, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Microbiology and
   Infectious Diseases
University of Maryland
123 Main Street, Room 777
College Park, Maryland 20742-0000

> Inside address should include credentials and honorifics, while the salutations should be Dear "Mr./Ms./Dr.", etc.

> States are spelled out and there are two spaces between the zip code and state. The zip code can be 5 or 9 digits, as available.

Dear Dr. Doe:

> One line between address line and salutation.

Thank you for your letter to Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), concerning NIH's research on the rare disease you are studying.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. Maecenas porttitor congue massa. Fusce posuere, magna sed pulvinar ultricies, purus lectus malesuada libero, sit amet commodo magna eros quis urna. Nunc viverra imperdiet enim. Fusce est. Vivamus a tellus. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Proin pharetra nonummy pede. Mauris et orci. Aenean nec lorem. In porttitor. Donec laoreet nonummy augue.

You can find information regarding NIH's funding on our website at www.nih.gov. Thank you for your letter and your continued support of the NIH.

> Leave one line between paragraph and complimentary close.
>
> Begin complimentary close and signature block six tabs in.
>
> Leave three blank lines between complimentary close and first line of signature block.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Smith, M.D., Ph.D.
Associate Director for Microbiology
   and Infectious Diseases

Receiving and Replying to Congressional Correspondence

When communicating with Congress, whether through correspondence, emails, visits, or Reports to Congress, please follow the specific guidelines and procedures below. NIH Exec Sec works closely with the Office of Legislative Policy and Analysis (OLPA) to ensure that all communication with Congress is appropriately handled and vetted. OLPA can be reached at reached at 301-496-3471. For an example congressional correspondence document, please see Appendix 3 - Example Congressional Correspondence.

Procedures for Handling Congressional Correspondence

When preparing a response to a member of Congress, be sure to clear the draft with your IC's legislative office or, if you are in an OD office, with OLPA before sending. OLPA may need to clear the response with HHS's Assistant Secretary for Legislation or Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources, or the Office of Management and Budget. Most congressional direct reply assignments will be assigned with OD clearance at the discretion of NIH Exec Sec.

Due Dates

For correspondence that will be signed by the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director, generally an ICO will be provided 4 - 7 business to prepare a draft response for clearance. This is included in the 10 – 12 business days timeline from receipt of the letter to the response being sent. For correspondence that will be signed by an ICO, 5 days will be provided to prepare and send a response. These timelines may change based on the complexity or urgency of the incoming letter. For more information on timelines, please see Section 2. Every effort should be made to meet due dates for congressional responses, especially if the assignment came to NIH via the Office of the Secretary, HHS, as OS does not grant extensions.

Interim Responses

If we anticipate that we will not be able to respond in a timely manner (generally 10-15 business days), we may decide an interim response is necessary. In those instances, OLPA may send an interim response to the member of Congress. An interim response may be in the form of a documented phone call, an email, or a formal written letter. Your ES PA or OLPA will be able to assist you in determining the appropriate form of interim response as well as with the wording, if necessary, based on the assignment.

Letters Answering a Series of Specific Questions

Some incoming letters, most often from members of Congress, ask for answers to a series of specific, usually numbered, questions. In preparing the reply to these letters, use boldface (or underscoring if you cannot produce boldface type) to type each question, exactly as asked, then type the answer in your normal font, immediately following the question. Please contact your ES PA for an sample letter answering a series of specific questions.

Procedures for Congressional Mail (including Hard Copy Mail and Email)

Delivery

All congressional mail received at the NIH is to be delivered to the NIH Exec Sec for assignment, regardless of the person to whom it is addressed.

Hard copy mail is normally delivered to NIH Exec Sec, however, **if congressional mail is delivered to your ICO, is handed to someone in a meeting, or is transmitted to an ICO via email, even if it is addressed to an ICO principal, you are required forward it to NIH Exec Sec for assignment back to you or to another ICO. Please provide it immediately; do not wait until you have a draft response to provide it to NIH Exec Sec.** The ICO Exec Sec Liaison should submit a copy of the letter in SAAVI through the "Create a Work Folder" function. NIH Exec Sec will review the mail and determine if an assignment in SAAVI is appropriate or if the mail should be returned to the ICO for processing, as outlined below:

- NIH Exec Sec will open and route, via SAAVI, mail addressed to:
  - the ICO's Director or Deputy Director
  - the ICO's Associate, Assistant, Scientific, or Clinical Director
  - the ICO's Executive Officer
  - an organization rather than a specific person
  - All other congressional mail received in NIH Exec Sec will be forwarded to the correspondence contact in the addressee's ICO.

Congressional Visits

OLPA must be notified of all visits to NIH by members of Congress or their staffs, and of all official visits *to* members of Congress or their staff by NIH employees or ASFR. OLPA will inform HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Legislation in advance of any proposed visit and the purpose of the visit.

Congressional Reports Required by Law

NIH is responsible for preparing several different types of reports required by Congress, including Authorizing Reports and Appropriations Reports. These reports differ from Questions-for-the-Record (QFRs) that come in letter form, which will be assigned to the appropriate ICO and coordinated separately by OLPA. NIH Exec Sec can provide more detailed guidelines and procedures concerning the time, preparation, submission, review, and revision of these reports and accompanying documents. Please contact your ES PA for further information.

Congressional Reports Package—Authorizing Reports

The following instructions apply to statutorily required reports prepared for transmittal to Congress by NIH or HHS. They do not apply to reports required by the appropriations (see below) or legislative committees of Congress nor to reports required by the White House. If you have questions regarding whether your report fits into this category, please contact OLPA for further information.

Instructions

Prepare the entire report package in final format, ready for transmittal for HHS clearance and transmittal to Congress, even though it may be returned for changes as a result of NIH and HHS departmental reviews. The report package, to be forwarded to NIH Exec Sec in SAAVI, must include the following documents:

Correspondence Type	To/From	Preparation Guidelines	Note
Transmittal Memorandum	**From:** NIH Director **To:** Asst. Secretary for Legislation	• MS Word • Use NIH digital letterhead*	• Exec Sec will add the digital letterhead
Transmittal Letter	**From:** NIH/ICO Directors /Assistant Secretary for Legislation **To:** Report Recipients/ members of Congress as identified by your ICO's Legislative Contact or the NIH OLPA	• Prepare in MS Word • NIH electronic letterhead if for the NIH Director's signature; • No letterhead if for the HHS Secretary's signature	• Report recipients may be identified in the requiring statute. • Furthermore, if recipients are not specified, recipients may be appropriate members of Congress identified by your ICO's Legislative

	- Or- ***To:*** Recipients other than Congress (i.e., FDA, GAO, or the Secretary of HHS for information not action), the transmittal letters or memoranda will differ. In these cases, first consult the instructions in the "Remarks" section of your SAAVI assignment and, second, your ES PA.		Contact or the NIH OLPA. • If you have the appropriate DHHS electronic letterhead you may use it on letters for the secretary's signature
Report (in Final Form)	***From:*** NIH/ICO Directors ***To:*** Recipients Required by Law or otherwise identified	Prepare the report and any attachments or appendices in MS Word, unless only available in other electronic format such as MS Excel, Adobe Acrobat, PowerPoint slides, etc.	• This applies unless it is to be printed and bound after being approved by HHS.

Note: instructions on preparing documents for transmittal to the Secretary or Congress, including Forms of Address, can be found below.

Preparing the Report

The report is officially a draft until reviewers' comments, if any, are addressed. The originating ICO, however, should prepare the report (as well as all transmittal letters) as a final document and should ensure the following:

- The report is responsive to the requirements of the statute.
- The report is written as much as possible in nontechnical, plain language.
- The text is clear of typographical and grammatical errors.
- See the Writing Tips and Examples section for more guidance.
- ES can provide examples of other reports to use as models.

Review Process and Transmittal

1. If there is an assignment from NIH Exec Sec, the originating office submits the report package to NIH Exec Sec in SAAVI. The package will be reviewed by staff in the ICOs, if necessary.

2. NIH reviewers' comments will be coordinated by NIH Exec Sec and, if substantive changes are needed, returned to the originating office for revision.

3. After revising the report and accompanying documents as necessary, the originating office will resubmit the package to NIH Exec Sec in SAAVI by the deadline.

4. After the NIH Director signs the transmittal memo to the HHS Secretary, NIH Exec Sec will send the report to the Department for review within the Office of the Secretary (OS) and by other HHS agencies, as necessary.

5. If OS or other HHS reviewers request substantive changes to the report or its transmittals, NIH Exec Sec will forward those comments to the originating office for consideration and, if necessary, request further revision of the report. If no changes are recommended, OS will either return the report to NIH Exec Sec for the NIH Director to sign the letters to Congress or will present the report to the HHS Assistant Secretary for Legislation for signature on the transmittal letters. In most cases, OS will transmit the letters and reports signed by the Assistant Secretary for Legislation while NIH Exec Sec will do the same for letters and reports signed by the NIH Director.

Congressional Reports Package—Appropriations Reports to Congress

Appropriations Reports to Congress, as requested by the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations within report language accompanying our annual appropriations bills, are coordinated and managed by OLPA. OLPA will provide guidance on any Appropriations Reports to Congress that your ICO may be involved in preparing. OLPA is the main point of contact for any questions relating to the preparation of Appropriations Reports to Congress as they manage the entire report preparation and review process.

Once reports are prepared, NIH Exec Sec assists OLPA with proper report formatting as well as obtaining the NIH Director's final approval and signature. NIH Exec Sec also maintains copies of all Appropriations Reports to Congress within SAAVI. NIH Exec Sec can assist your ICO with any questions regarding proper formatting of these reports.

Forms of Address for Congress and other Government Officials

The section below outlines the appropriate forms of address for Congressional correspondence and correspondence with other government officials. Note: all U.S. Senators and Representatives have webpages that include proper contact information.

General Guidelines

Guideline	Salutation
In official correspondence, the salutation is followed by a colon. Information courtesy notes may use a comma, if preferred.	Dear Mr. President: Dear Judge Smith:
For high-level officials, e.g., Vice President, Cabinet Members, Judges, etc., use the person's title in the salutation.	Dear Mr./Madam Secretary: Dear Mr./Madam Vice President:
Most elected officials, e.g., Governors, Members of Congress, Judges, are greeted with *Dear [Title]:*	Dear Governor [last name]: Dear Senator [last name]:
For lower-level officials, use *Dear Mr./Ms. [*<u>not</u> *Mrs.] [Surname]:*	Dear Ms. Smith: [e.g., state representative] Dear Mr. Jones: [e.g., Deputy Secretary]
Use *Dear Mrs.[Surname]* only for the First Lady or when addressing the spouse of a deceased official (such as for a condolence note.)	Dear Dr. Biden: Dear Mr. Emhoff Dear Mrs. McCain:

The Senate

Title	Address Line
Senator	The Honorable [Full Name] United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 Dear Senator [Surname]:
President of the Senate	The Honorable [Full Name] President of the Senate Washington, DC 20510

	Dear Senator [Surname]:
Majority/Majority Leader of the Senate	The Honorable [Full Name] Majority/Minority Leader United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 Dear Majority/Minority Leader [Surname]:
Former Senator	The Honorable [Full Name] [No Title] [Personal Address] Dear Senator [Surname]:
Senator-elect	The Honorable [Full Name] United States Senator-elect [address, if given, or] Washington, DC 20510 Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. [Surname]:
Office of a recently deceased Senator	Mr./Ms. [Full Name] [Title] Office of the Late [Full Name of Senator] Washington, DC 20510 Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. [Surname]:

House of Representatives

Title	Address Line
U.S. Representatives	The Honorable [Full Name] U.S. House of Representatives [Congressional District Address, or] Washington, DC 20515 Dear Representative [Surname]:
Delegates U.S. Territories	The Honorable [Full Name] Delegate from [Name of Territory], or Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 Dear Representative [Surname]:

Speaker of the House of Representatives	The Honorable [Full Name] Speaker of the House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 Dear Mr./Madam Speaker:
Majority/Minority Leader of the House	The Honorable [Full Name] Majority/Minority Leader U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 Dear Majority/Minority Leader [Surname]:
Former Representative	The Honorable [Full Name] [No Title] [Personal Address] Dear Mr./Ms.: [Surname]
Representative-elect	The Honorable [Full Name] U.S. Representative-elect [address, if given, or] Washington, DC 20515 Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. [Surname]:
Office of a recently deceased Representative	Mr./Ms. [Full Name] Administrative Assistant Office of the Late [Full Name of Representative] Washington, DC 20515 Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. [Surname]:

Congressional Committees

Title	Address Line
Committee Chairperson	The Honorable [Full Name] Chair/Chairman/Chairwoman, [Name of Committee] United States Senate/U.S. House of Representatives] Washington, DC 20510 [or 20515 for House Committees] Dear Mr. Chairman/Madam Chairwoman: Note: Members should be addressed as Chair when they are writing in their official capacity as Chair (using Committee letterhead); but if they are writing in only as a member, you should not use "Chair."

	Also, some members go by Chair, Chairwoman, or Madam Chair; please consult the Member's website or your OLPA contact if you are unsure.
Subcommittee Chairperson	The Honorable [Full Name] Chair[wo]man, [Name of Subcommittee] [Name of Parent Committee] United States Senate/U.S. House of Representatives] Washington, DC 20510 [or 20515 for House Committees] Dear Senator/Representative [Surname]:
Joint Committee Chairperson	The Honorable [Full Name] Chair/Chairman/Chairwoman, [Name of Joint Committee] Congress of the United State Washington, DC 20510 Note: Members should be addressed as Chair when they are writing in their official capacity as Chair (using Committee letterhead); but if they are writing in only as a member, you should not use "Chair." Also, some members go by Chair, Chairwoman, or Madam Chair; please consult the Member's website or your OLPA contact if you are unsure. [Senate] Dear Mr. Chairman/Madam Chairwoman: [House] Dear Representative [Surname]:
Chief Counsel of a Committee	Mr./Ms. [Full Name] Chief Counsel, [Name of Committee] [United States Senate/ U.S. House of Representatives] Washington, DC 20510 [or 20515 for House Committees] Dear Mr./Ms. [Surname]:

Other Government Officials

Title	Address Line
The President	The President The White House Washington, DC 20500 [*Note*: *Because the White House has its own ZIP code, letters to the White House do not need a street address.]* Dear Mr./Madam President:
The President's Spouse	Mr./Mrs./Dr. [Last Name] The White House Washington, DC 20500 Dear Mr./Mrs./Dr. [last name]:
Governors	*Address of the Letter:* The Honorable [Full Name] Governor of [State or the Commonwealth of State]** City, State, ZIP Code *Address on the Envelope:* The Honorable [Full Name] Governor of [State] Street Address City, State ZIP Code Dear Governor [Last Name]: **Commonwealths include Virginia, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky.
State Legislator	*Address of the Letter:* The Honorable [full name] Name of State *[House of Representatives, Assembly, or House of Delegates]* City, State ZIP Code *Address on the Envelope:* The Honorable [full name] Name of State *[House of Representatives, Assembly, or House of Delegates]* Street Address City, State ZIP Code

	For a State Senator: Dear Senator [Last Name]: For a State Representative, Assembly Member, or Delegate: Dear Mr./Ms. [last name]:

Other High-Level Officials

Use the following salutations for high-level officials:

Salutation	Title
Dear Mr./Madam President:	President of the United States
Dear Mr./Madam Vice President:	Vice President of the United States
Dear Mr./Mrs. (surname):	Spouse of the President of the United States / Spouse of Vice President of the United States
Dear Mr./Madam Secretary:	Cabinet Member
Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):	Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretary
Mr./Madam Attorney General:	Attorney General of the United States
Mr./Madam Chief Justice:	The Chief Justice, Supreme Court
Mr./Madam Justice:	Associate Justice, Supreme Court
Dear Judge:	Chief Judge/Judge
Dear Mr./Madam President:	President of the Senate
Dear Mr./Madam Speaker:	Speaker of the House
Dear Senator (surname):	United States Senator, including the Senate Majority Leader
Dear Representative (surname):	Member of U.S. House of Representatives
Dear Mr./Madam Chair	Chair of a congressional committee or subcommittee
Dear Senator or Representative (surname):	Ranking minority member of a congressional committee/subcommittee
Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador:	United States Ambassador
Dear Mr./Madam Minister:	American Minister
Dear Governor (surname):	Governor
Dear Senator (surname):	State Senator
Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):	State Rep., Assembly Member, or Delegate
Dear Mayor (surname):	Mayor* *New York City Mayor is "Mayor of New York City" Washington, D.C. Mayor is "Mayor of the District of Columbia"

Section 3: Preparing Official Memoranda

NIH Exec Sec processes all decision and information memos that go to the NIH Director, NIH Principal Deputy Director, and memos to the HHS Secretary, HHS Deputy Secretary, and other leadership officials from NIH. A decision memo seeks the recipient's signature on a document or approval of a proposed action(s). An information memo educates the recipient in writing about an important issue or action where the subject matter does not warrant a face-to-face meeting, and they do not require the recipient to take any action.

Submitting Memoranda for Signature

All memos, including both decision and information memos, addressed to the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director should be routed through NIH Exec Sec. This also includes requests for the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director's signature on a document, <u>even if</u> a formal memo is not provided. See Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 for example memos and the section below for specifics on formatting.

Below are guidelines for submitting packages for the NIH Director's or Principal Deputy Director's signature, approval, or information:

Prior to Routing to Exec Sec for Signature

- If your ICO plans to send a memorandum or document for the NIH Director's or Principal Deputy Director's approval or signature, **please give your ES PA a heads-up <u>before</u> you start the routing process.** NIH Exec Sec often receives time sensitive packages with no forewarning; it is helpful to know that we will be expecting a package from your ICO to allow sufficient time for leadership review.

- Your ES PA is always available to review documents for the NIH Director's or Principal Deputy Director's signature <u>prior</u> to routing. ***We encourage ICOs to share drafts of documents with your ES PA before starting the formal review process and obtaining your ICO Director's signature.*** This practice will allow NIH Exec Sec to flag any major issues with the package or documents.
  - o If we receive a package with a significant error or in an incorrect format, we will send it back to the originating ICO for correction and re-signature. Please do a complete review of all documents to ensure they conform with our formatting requirements (which can be seen later in this section). If you have any questions on formatting, please reach out to your ES PA before finalizing the document.
  - o The originating office is responsible for checking the accuracy of the recipient's name, title, and address of any correspondence to be signed.

Routing Process and Timelines

- All memos should be submitted in SAAVI through the "Create a Workfolder" function. Hardcopy packages will not be accepted (if there is a reason to submit in hard copy, please contact your ES PA to discuss. If you are unable to submit through SAAVI, please contact your ES PA. Guidelines for submission include:

  o All documents for signature should be provided in Word (PDFs **will not** be accepted, unless the document is set-up for digital signature).

  o Memos signed by your ICO Director should be provided both in Word and PDF.

  o Related routing slips may be provided in PDF. For routing slips, please include NIH Exec Sec as a point of clearance (it should be labeled as "Patrice Allen-Gifford, Director, Executive Secretariat" and not the ES PA name).

  o Please clearly label all background and attachment documents.

- If you have a signature deadline for your package, please let the ES PA know before submitting the package. You must allow **5 days** (unless there are extenuating circumstances) for signature once NIH Exec Sec receives the package (and additional time may be needed if additional ICO clearance is required or if the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director is on travel).

  o **NOTE:** *It is the ICO's responsibility* to ensure that the package reaches NIH Exec Sec with sufficient time for clearance and signature.

- Always clear your package with the relevant offices within your ICO. For example, for congressional responses, you should clear with your Legislative office (for OD offices, please clear with OLPA). The originating office is responsible for ensuring that all appropriate offices are included on the routing slip.

Strategic Plans

NIH Exec Sec also assists with the clearance and approval of ICO Strategic Plans. Please contact your ES PA for further information on how to request clearance of an ICO Strategic Plan.

Submitting Memoranda Addressed to the HHS Secretary or HHS Deputy Secretary

If your ICO anticipates it will need to send a memorandum to the HHS Secretary or HHS Deputy Secretary, please contact your ES PA as soon as possible. This includes all decision memos requesting the HHS Secretary's approval on a policy or a request to sign a document; please see Section 2 for specific guidance on Reports to Congress. This also includes Information Memos to the Secretary (please contact your ES PA for an example of an Information Memo).

Guidelines for submitting Secretarial Memos:

- Please submit the draft memo for NIH Director's signature to NIH Exec Sec a **minimum of 4 weeks** before you wish the memo to be signed by the Secretary so NIH can comply with the Department's time guidelines. If you are unable to meet that timeline, please contact your ES PA immediately.

- Please see the Memorandum Formatting Section for specific guidelines on how to format the memo. All memos should be formatted prior to being submitted to NIH Exec Sec.

- Once NIH Exec Sec receives the memo, we will clear with the appropriate offices within NIH. This process can take a minimum of 3-5 business days, so plan accordingly. Once the memo has been cleared internally, NIH Exec Sec will obtain the NIH Director's signature on the memo. NOTE: Except for rare circumstances, memos to the HHS Secretary must be signed by the NIH Director and cannot be signed by an ICO Director.

- NIH Exec Sec will submit the memo package to HHS Exec Sec through official channels. HHS Exec Sec will clear the memo through the Department. We may receive one or more rounds of comments on the memo requiring revision and re-signature by the NIH Director. Please be aware that this process can be lengthy, and therefore plan accordingly. Once the memo is finalized by HHS Exec Sec, they will obtain the HHS Secretary's signature on the memo.

Secretarial Briefing Memos

Another form of memo to the Secretary is a Briefing Memo. Briefing memos are used when the NIH Director, Principal Deputy Director, or other NIH leadership meet with the HHS Secretary or HHS Deputy Secretary to brief them on a particular topic. If a Secretarial briefing memo is required, your ES PA will reach out to you to provide specific guidance. There is a required cover memo (see Appendix 7), which should accompany any background documents. Background documents should be no more than 5 pages in length. Secretarial briefing memos are due no later than 2pm, two business days before the meeting.

What is the NIH Memorandum Style Format?

This section is the memorandum style format guide. It provides formatting guidelines for all memo types mentioned above. Please use it in conjunction with the example memos in the appendix: a simple decision memo is Appendix 4; a complex decision memo is Appendix 5; a Secretarial Decision Memo is Appendix 6; and a Secretarial Briefing Memo is Appendix 7. Contact your ES PA with any formatting questions.

All signed memos to the Director or Principal Deputy Director must be dated. NIH Exec Sec will return undated memoranda to you for dating.

Spacing

Leave two blank lines between the Subject of the memo and the first line of the memorandum.

Use two spaces between sentences. Use single spacing between lines for all memoranda (memos), even very short ones.

Leave one blank line between paragraphs.

Leave three blanks lines between the last line of the memorandum and the signer's name. Include the signer's degrees, but not the signer's title.

Margins

All margins (top, bottom, left, and right) should be set to one inch. The margins may be modified if necessary to properly format the letter (to ensure that the signer's name is on one page, etc.). Do not justify the right margin.

Address Headings

The address headings should be in the following order:

- **DATE***: After leaving a one-inch margin at the top of the page and spacing down at least six lines, enter "**DATE**:" (in bold and capitalized) at the left margin. Hit "Tab" twice so that the text lines up with the text below. The date the memo is signed should be typed (if known). Date-stamped memos will only be accepted in limited circumstances.

- **TO***: Leave one blank line below "**DATE:**" line in the heading, then enter "**TO:**" (in bold and capitalized). Hit "Tab" so that the text lines up with the text above and below, and begin the addressee's name on the same line. Enter the addressee's full title on the line below his or her name, aligned with the name. If

the memorandum has two addressees, include both names in the heading, connected by *and*.

For both external and internal formal correspondence, always use the full name and title for each person. If you use the formal name and title for one person referenced, all other names should also include the full name and title. Note: When referencing the HHS Secretary, it should only be the "Secretary" and not "U.S Department of Health and Human Services" Secretary.

- "**THROUGH**:" If a memorandum is to be routed through intermediate officials on its way to the addressee, indicate the routing immediately below the "**TO:**". Enter "**THROUGH:**" (in bold and capitalized) on the left margin, then hit "Tab" twice (or to line up with the other text), followed by the name, title, and office of each person, with lines provided where each immediate official can sign or initial. When more than one *Through* addressee is listed, the memo goes first to the last person listed. Each *Through* addressee will sign or initial the memo and send it on. There should be a blank space between each person's name.

- "**FROM**:" Leave one blank line below the "**TO:**" or **"THROUGH:"** lines in the heading, then enter "**FROM**:" (in bold and capitalized) at the left margin, "Tab" until it lines up with the text above and follow with the title and organization (not the name) of the person who will sign the memo, aligned below the addressee's name and title.

  Note: Any memorandum to the NIH Director must either be signed by or sent through the appropriate ICO director. Any memorandum to the HHS Secretary must either be signed by or go through the NIH Director.

  A memo to the HHS Secretary must be addressed through the Senior Counselor and the Department's Executive Secretariat (ES). Please see the Appendix 6 for the specific format.

- "**SUBJECT**:" Leave one blank line below the **FROM:** line in the heading, then enter "**SUBJECT:"** (in bold and capitalized at the left margin).

  Enter the subject of the memo on the same line hitting "Tab" twice to align with the "**TO**," "**FROM**," and "**DATE**" headings. Begin a second and any following lines of the subject directly below where the first line of the subject begins.

  Capitalize the first letter of each word except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions. Do not put a period at the end of the subject.

  Depending on the type of memo, put – DECISION or – INFORMATION (capitalized, but not bolded) at the end of the subject.

Memo Body

Leave two blank lines following the "**SUBJECT:**" and start the body of the memorandum on the next line. Do not indent paragraphs.

A Standard Decision Memo should have the following sub-sections: **ISSUE, DISCUSSION,** and **RECOMMENDATION** (these should be bolded, capitalized, and underlined). If you want to deviate from these headings, please coordinate with your ES PA.

- **ISSUE:** The issue section should briefly state the problem. This section should be no more than one paragraph.

- **DISCUSSION:** Provide relevant information on the origin, background, and implications of the issue or problem. If the memo requests action by a certain date, provide an explanation for the deadline. The memorandum should be limited to one, or at the most, two pages. If extensive background material is necessary, cite it in this section and attach it as one or more Attachments.

   Begin all paragraphs at the left margin and <u>do not justify the right margin</u>. Leave a blank line between paragraphs. If necessary, as a reference aid, you may use subparagraphs as follows:

   1. Label different levels of subparagraphs, in the following sequence: 1, a, (1), (a)

   2. When using labeled subparagraphs, you need to have at least a 2 if you have a 1, at least a (b) if you have an (a), etc.

   3. Indent subparagraphs in ½ inch increments:
      a. In 12-point font, 6 spaces for each level.
      b. Leave one blank line between subparagraphs.

- **RECOMMENDATION**: Concisely state the course of action you are recommending be approved ("I recommend you approve…"). Avoid ending a memo with a subparagraph. If presenting multiple options, clearly state and list each option separately. For each option, discuss who would benefit or be harmed by choosing the option, potential reactions, costs, etc. Follow with "pros" and "cons."

   The closing paragraph should tie the information back together in some way.

Memo Closing

Below is a list and description of the elements of a memo closing.

Signer's Name:

Leave three blank lines below the last line of the memo text, and, after hitting "Tab" 6 times, type the signer's name and any academic degrees. On a memorandum, enter only the signer's name and degrees, not his or her title; the title is given in the memo's heading.

Decision Line:

Enter a decision line at the end of the memorandum when asking the addressee to indicate a decision on the memorandum itself. A memorandum with a decision line will always be an ACTION memorandum.

Leave 1 blank line below the typed signature line and enter "**DECISION**" at the left margin.

Space down 2 lines (leaving 1 blank line again) and beginning at the left margin state concisely what the sender is asking the addressee to approve or disapprove.

Leave 1 more blank line and enter spaces for the addressee to indicate his or her decision. If you are presenting alternatives for the addressee to choose from, number them clearly and provide spaces to indicate a decision with each. See Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 for examples of a simple and complex decision memo.

Attachments:

Place information about attachments at the bottom of the memo, after the Decision section.

For all attachments, write *Attachment* and, beginning on the next line, list the material, giving a title or short description, labeled by either letter (Attachment A:) or number (Attachment 1). Do not extend the identification beyond the middle of the page. If the identification must continue on the next line, indent two spaces from the left margin. When listing more than one attachment, begin the title or description of each on the next line at the left margin. See Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 for examples.

Courtesy Copies:

Show any distribution of information copies with a courtesy copy (cc:) notation at the bottom of the memo after the Attachments. Leave one blank line after the last line of the memo and enter cc: at the left margin. Beginning at the left margin on the next line, identify each addressee on a separate line (listing name, degrees, title, and organization). See Appendix 5 for an example.

Multipage Memoranda:

In a memo of more than one page, do not start a paragraph near the bottom of a page unless you have room for at least the first two lines of the paragraph and the paragraph will continue for at least two more lines on the next page. Use plain white paper [not NIH or other letterhead] for the second and following pages of a memo.

Include a header, identifying the page number and addressee on the second page and any following pages of a multipage memo. The header should be right-justified and the first line should read "Addressee Name" and the second line should read "Page 2."

Most word-processing software lets you set a header that will be repeated on all additional pages with the correct page number automatically inserted. By using a header setting, you can be sure the header will appear in the correct position on each page regardless of how the memo may be edited or rewritten.

Leave two blank lines between the header and the first line of the text on this page. Try to have at least two lines of text on the second page. As always, remember, the final paragraph should summarize the memo, not introduce new information or make new conclusions.

Memos to the Secretary

There are a few key formatting differences for memos addressed to the Sectary:

- On a memorandum addressed to the Secretary, type Name, Secretary on the **TO:** line.
- Route all memos to the Secretary through the Office of the Secretary's Executive Secretariat (ES).
- For memos with multiple pages, the header should be "SUBJECT" on the first line, then Page 2 (note, this is different than the NIH memo format).

Please see the [Appendix 6](#) for the HHS Memo for specific information or contact your [ES PA](#).

Electronic and Digital Signatures

Due to the COVID pandemic, NIH Exec Sec has primarily transitioned to electronic and digital signatures. An electronic signature is a signature that is added as a picture to a PDF or Word document by NIH Exec Sec, after approval by the signer. A digital signature is a signature officially signed by the signer in Word or Abode PDF, which includes a timestamp. If you have questions about which signature or how to format documents for either electronic or digital signature, please contact your [ES PA](#).

Example Memorandum Template

The following page has a simple example memorandum template for your reference, with specific formatting highlighted. For more complex templates, see Appendix 4 and Appendix 5.

> Space down six lines from the top to the line with "DATE"

> Margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be 1 inch.

DATE: January 1, 2019

TO: Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
                     Director, National Institutes of Health

> The headings should be left justified and text should line up.

FROM: Director, Executive Secretariat, National Institutes of Health

SUBJECT: Request to Approve New Letterhead – DECISION

<u>ISSUE</u>

> Two lines in between subject and

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Executive Secretariat (ES) requests the NIH Director approve the use of the new NIH letterhead.

<u>DISCUSSION</u>   > Headings should be capitalized, bolded, and underlined.

NIH has used the same letterhead for the last 50 years. The letterhead is now outdated and does not feature the new logo from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). HHS requested that NIH update the letterhead to include the new logo from HHS, as required by the HHS Regulation 1 CFR 75. HHS indicated that all other operating and staff divisions have updated their letterhead, with the exception of NIH.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. Maecenas porttitor congue massa. Fusce posuere, magna sed pulvinar ultricies, purus lectus malesuada libero, sit amet commodo magna eros quis urna. Nunc viverra imperdiet enim. Fusce est. Vivamus a tellus. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Proin pharetra nonummy pede. Mauris et orci. Aenean nec lorem. In porttitor. Donec laoreet nonummy augue. Suspendisse dui purus, scelerisque at, vulputate vitae, pretium mattis, nunc. Mauris eget neque at sem venenatis eleifend. Ut nonummy.

To implement this change, ES will need to issue new guidance to all ES liaisons instructing them to discontinue the use of the old letterhead and to provide training and guidance on the use of the new letterhead. This will take approximately 5,000 hours to complete during fiscal year 2019.

Include a header with the name and page number.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend you approve the use of the new NIH letterhead to ensure NIH is in compliance with HHS Regulation 1 CFR 75.

Three lines down, six tabs in type the signer's name. It should be signed above.

Patrice Allen-Gifford

Always include Approve, Disapprove, and Need More Information as the options.

DECISION

I approve the use of the new NIH letterhead.

Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Need More Information _____

_____   _____
Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.   Date

Attachments
Attachment A: Old NIH Letterhead
Attachment B: New NIH Letterhead

Attachments listed after the decision line. CC listed below the attachments.

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Section 4: Style Guide: Writing Effective Documents

The following topics cover some of the grammar, punctuation, and other common errors NIH Exec Sec finds when editing letters prepared for the NIH Director's or NIH Principal Deputy Director's signature. For more information on style guidelines, check the GPO Style Manual and the HHS Guide to Document Preparation.

Plain Language at NIH: What is it and why should you use it?

Plain language is grammatically correct language that includes complete sentence structure and accurate word usage. Plain language is *not* unprofessional writing or a method of "dumbing down" or "talking down" to the reader.

Writing that is clear and to the point helps improve communication and takes less time to read and understand. Clear writing tells the reader exactly what the reader needs to know without using unnecessary words or expressions. Communicating clearly is its own reward and saves time and money. It also improves reader response to messages. Using plain language avoids creating barriers that set us apart from the people with whom we are communicating.

Part of the NIH mission is to reach all Americans with useful health information and understandable research results. NIH fully supports the Plain Language initiative, which has its origins in a federal directive that requires agencies to incorporate plain language elements in the development of communications materials for the public. NIH is committed to the use of plain language in all new documents written for the public, other government entities, and fellow workers.

You can follow this link to get more information on how to use plain language in your work. For more information on plain language, please see the Plain Language Writing Act of 2010, which requires the federal government to write documents, such as tax returns, federal aid applications, and Veterans Administration forms in simple and easy-to-understand language. Other plain language resources include a classroom training from the Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN) and the Center for Plain Language. Below are some guidelines for ensuring plain language when developing your document:

Organization

People read documents to get answers. Organize your message to respond to their interests and concerns. Readers ask several key questions:

- *Why are you sending this to me?*

- *How does this affect me?*

- *What am I supposed to do?*

Use introductions to help your reader understand how the document is organized. State up front the goal and purpose of the document (answering an inquiry, laying out facts, etc.) and try to pro-actively answer any questions that the reader may have about the document. For a simple letter or memorandum, an introductory paragraph should suffice. For brochures and lengthy briefing documents or reports, use a table of contents or other list early in the document to guide the reader. Sentence length should average 15-20 words. Sentences that are simple, active, affirmative, and declarative hold the reader's interest. Generally, each paragraph should contain only one topic. A series of paragraphs may be used to express complex or highly technical information.

Layout

Use adequate margins and provide white space between sections to break up your text. This makes it easier for the reader to comprehend your message.

Use headings to guide the reader; the question-and-answer format is especially helpful. Try to anticipate the reader's questions and pose them as the reader would.

Reader's Question	Heading
What is cancer?	Cancer
Can I get breast cancer?	Breast Cancer
What causes cancer?	Known Causes of Cancer
Can cancer be cured?	Mortality & Morbidity

Typography

Below are some general guidelines for the typography of a document. Please note, however, that ES maintains specific guidelines for Correspondence (see Section 2 for specific guidelines) and Memoranda (see Section 3 for specific guidelines).

- Generally, use same font throughout the text of a document.

- Use shading/boxes sparingly.

- Bullets and numbers:

    o Generally, do not use more than two types of bullets in a document.

    o Use numbers only if there is a sequence to identify or to help guide the reader in a long list of items.

Composing Effective Responses

Here are tips for composing effective responses:

- **Be responsive to the correspondent's concerns**
  Read the incoming letter carefully. Unless there is a reason that you should not do so, make sure the response addresses the major points in the incoming letter. Recipients should feel that the signatory understands, takes seriously, and is responsive to their concerns.

- **Keep Response Letters Brief**
  Response letters should be one or two pages, if possible, and use plain language. If additional information is necessary, attach an enclosure.

- **Avoid referring to the date of the incoming letter**
  Remember to thank the correspondent for writing on a particular issue at the beginning of the letter. Example: Thank you for your letter about NIH's funding of Alzheimer's disease. Only use a date when it is necessary to distinguish which response you are referencing (for example, if there are multiple incoming letters with different dates).

- **Explain when you are responding for another.**
  If HHS asked the NIH Director to respond on the Secretary's behalf to a letter, say: The Secretary asked me to respond to your letter.

- **Use the correct form of address and salutation**
  Please see Section 2 for information on forms of address and salutations.

- **Use acronyms sparingly**
  Only when the term is used more than once in a letter.

- **Avoid long and numerous legal citations**
  Don't include information that is highly technical, medical, or scientific (except when absolutely necessary to answer the incoming letter). If such information is necessary, include it in an enclosure. Ensure that the title of the enclosure reflects both the topic and the correspondent. Sample title: Information on Alzheimer's Disease for Senator John Doe.

- **Use the word I**
  Avoid we or NIH, when the NIH Director is making a personal statement in a letter the Director will sign. Example: I appreciate your bringing to my attention the recommendations of the American Hospital Association.

- **Do not commit the NIH Director to any action**

including participation in an event, without checking with senior leadership. For example, <u>do not say</u> the Director would like to see the correspondent the next time the correspondent is in town without the appropriate clearance.

- **Spell out National Institutes of Health completely**
the first time you write it, except in internal memoranda where defining NIH may not be necessary.

- **Be respectful to follow-up requests**
Avoid instructing a member of Congress or other high-level official to call someone or visit a website for further information. If necessary, ask the official to have his/her staff contact the person or visit the website.

- **Identify a contact for follow-up action, if appropriate**
Example: If you have additional questions regarding federal pandemic response plans, please have your staff contact [name], [title], [phone number].

- **End responses politely**
If appropriate, use expressions such as: "I look forward to continued collaboration with you on this issue," or "Thank you for your commitment to biomedical research." You may wish to add phrases such as: "Please contact me if you have further thoughts or concerns." Use the word contact, not call. For other letters, you might close with: "I hope this information is helpful to you."

- **Acknowledge co-signers**
If the incoming letter is from <u>two</u> individuals who will both receive a response, reference the specific name in each letter using the following language: "I will also provide this response to [Title First and Last Name (e.g., Representative John Smith)]." If the incoming letter is from <u>three or more </u>individuals who will all receive a response (typically members/ senators/ governors/etc.), include the following language: "I will also provide this response to the [co-signers] of your letter." If the Director is not sending letters to every person (which occurs in limited circumstances), write: "Please share my letter with your co-signers."

What are NIH's Writing Guidelines?

This section details the writing guidelines when preparing correspondence and other documents. When preparing documents to submit to NIH Exec Sec, please review these guidelines and contact your ES PA with any questions. Topics include:

- Verb forms
- Word choices
- Frequently misused words
- Punctuation
- Grammar
- Structure
- Other Tips (Abbreviations & acronyms, capitalizations, contractions, dates, names, numbers, and symbols)

Verb Forms

Use the Active Voice
The active voice eliminates confusion by naming the "actor" in the sentence. However, the passive voice is appropriate when the actor is unknown, unimportant, or obvious—e.g., small items are often stolen.

Incorrect	Correct
The decision has been changed.	We have changed our decision.
The application was reviewed**.**	We reviewed your application.

Use Action Verbs
Action verbs are short and direct. Avoid "nominalization," i.e. using the noun form when it is simpler and clearer to use the verb.

Incorrect	Correct
give consideration to	consider
is applicable to	applies to
make payment	pay
is concerned with	concerns

Use the Present Tense
Present tense makes your material more direct and forceful.

Instead of…	Use…
If you change the principal investigator or key staff at a later date, it will be necessary for you to notify NIH.	You must notify us if there is a change in the principal investigator or other key staff.
If NIH is to determine your financial liability, it will be necessary that proof of payment is submitted.	You must send us proof of payment so that we can process your claim.

Word Choices

Do <u>Not</u> Use "the" Before "NIH"

Do not use "the" before the acronym NIH (or other ICO acronyms), unless it is in front of a proper noun. For example, write "The letter was addressed to NIH" instead of "The letter was addressed to the NIH." However, you would write "The NIH BRAIN Initiative signals a paradigm shift for neuroscience."

Use Common, Everyday Words

Documents should be written clearly and simply. Government writing should be dignified, but not pompous.

Instead of…	Use…
accordingly	so
afford an opportunity	allow
at a later date	later
close proximity	near
in the event that	if
incumbent upon	must
utilize	use

Use "You" and Other Personal Pronouns

Instead of…	Use…
The Agency or NIH	we
Employees, grant applicants, patient	you

Use "Must" Instead Of "Shall"

Using "shall" creates confusion. To impose a legal obligation, use "must." To predict a future action, use "will."

Instead of…	Use…
The application shall be signed.	You must sign the application.
You shall be notified.	We will notify you.

Using "Not Only" in Conjunction with "But Also" or "As Well"
Always use "not only" in conjunction with either "but also" or "as well":

Instead of…	Use…
Jim bought not only a computer and a new desk.	Jim bought not only a computer but also a new desk.
Not only did Sheila send her complaint letter to the company, she also sent it to newspapers too.	Sheila sent her complaint letter not only to the company but to the newspaper as well.

Avoid Using Undefined Technical Terms

Instead of…	Use…
An underpayment exists...	We owe you additional money...
The NIH OER Guide...	The NIH Office of Extramural Programs Guide to Grants and Contracts...

Use Positive Rather Than Negative Words
Words can attract or repel readers and negative statements can be unclear. However, the negative is appropriate if you're cautioning the reader—for example, "Don't smoke."

Instead of…	Use…
If your cooperation is not forthcoming, the contract will end, and related payments will be terminated.	Please send the completed form to us right away so your monthly payments can continue.

Avoid Using Gender-Specific Terms

Instead of…	Use…
Manpower	Personnel, workforce
The Director or his or her designee must complete the form.	The Director or the Director's designee must complete the form

Avoid Long Strings of Nouns

Instead of…	Use…
Human research subjects safety protection procedures development…	Development of procedures to protect human research subjects…

Frequently Misused Words

Words	Guideline	Example
Affect vs. effect	Affect is generally a verb; effect is generally a noun.	- Cigarette smoke affects my breathing. - Cigarette smoke has an effect on my breathing.
Which vs. that	*Which* introduces a nonrestrictive clause and always follows a comma. *That* introduces a restrictive clause and is never preceded by a comma.	- Cotton candy, which always makes me sick, is one of my weaknesses. (The clause is nonrestrictive because it refers to all cotton candy.) - Cotton candy that is red always makes me sick. The clause is restrictive because it describes a specific cotton candy.)
Composed of vs. comprises	Do not use *composed of*. Instead, use *compose* when the parts come before the whole in a sentence. Or, use *comprise* when the whole comes before the parts.	- Five working days and two weekend days compose a week. - The lab comprises two researchers and four lab technicians.
Ensure vs. insure vs. assure	The verbs *ensure*, *insure*, and *assure* all generally mean "to make sure." However, there are slight differences in context that makes one of these more appropriate than the others.	- Use *assure* for things that are alive (remember that *a* is for *alive*) - Use *ensure* to guarantee events and conditions (remember those two e's at the end of guarantee) - Use *insure* to refer to financial contexts (remember the "i" is for income).

Words	Guideline	Example
Fewer vs. less	Use *fewer* when referring to a group of distinct elements, *less* when referring to an aggregate:	• Fewer people are dying of strokes. • Fewer sugar cubes in your coffee means less sugar in your diet. • Please use less vinegar in that dressing.
If vs. whether	*If* specifies a condition; *whether* introduces an indirect question concerning alternatives (you do not need to include "or not" with whether).	• If he can do it, let him. • I do not know whether he can do it.
Imply vs. infer	To *imply* is to express something indirectly. To *infer* is to deduce, surmise, or conclude something, based on indirect evidence.	• She rolled her eyes, implying that she thought it was a bad idea. • When the audience claps, I infer that they enjoyed my playing.
Lay vs. lie	*Lay* (past tense and past participle form, *laid*) is a transitive verb; people lay things on the table or floor. People do not "lay down" to sleep. *Lie* (past tense, lay; past participle, *lain*) is an intransitive verb; things and people lie on the table or on the couch	• Mary laid the sweater on the chair. • The sweater is lying on the chair. • Please lay your books on the table. • John is lying on the couch. • Yesterday, John lay on the couch all afternoon. (The simple past tense of lie is lay.)
Principal vs. principle	*Principal* can be either a noun or an adjective, meaning either a person in authority or a person or thing of primary importance. *Principle* is always a noun, usually referring to a fundamental rule, characteristic, or ingredient.	• philosophical principle • principal of a school • principal investigator

Words	Guideline	Example
Under way vs. underway	*Under way* is a commonly used adverbial phrase. *Underway* is a rarely used adjective.	• Some aircraft are capable of refueling while under way. • The meeting is under way. • Some aircraft are capable of underway refueling.
Since vs. as vs. because	*Since* should be used primarily for temporal distance. *As* should be used for causal relationships.	• Since the conference, the students have been working on their projects. • He decided to attend the conference, as he was in Bethesda anyway.
Me vs. I vs. myself	Use *I*, *we*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, they when the pronoun is the subject of the verb. Use *me*, *us*, *you*, *him*, *her*, *it*, them when the pronoun is the direct or indirect object of the verb. Reflexive pronoun *myself* is always used as the object of a sentence, never the subject.	• I wrote a letter to NIH. • Jane and John surprised Kate, Elizabeth, and me with an invitation to the conference • She found herself the only one in favor of the move.

Hyphenated Words

Guidelines	Example
Except after two- or three-letter prefixes, use a hyphen to avoid double vowels or triple consonants.	• cooperate (two-letter prefix = co-) • prehistoric (three-letter prefix = pre-) • Naso-orbital, ice-axe, shell-like
Some words are never hyphenated.	Cannot, anyone, anywhere, and someone
No one is always two words.	No one replied to the job posting.
As a verb, *follow up* is two words. As a noun or adjective, use a hyphen.	• Please follow up with the customer. • The follow-up meeting was productive.
Hyphenate words that form an adjective/modifier phrase.	• He is a member of the hard-of-hearing community. • She purchased a state-of-the-art entertainment system.

Guidelines	Example
Do not hyphenate words that form a predicate phrase.	• The visitors were hard of hearing. • Her system is state of the art.
Do not hyphenate words made up of two nouns when it is not being used as a modifier.	• The virus has spread nationwide. • The workday is almost over!
Do not hyphenate an adverb-participle combination if the adverb ends in –*ly*.	• She designed a well-operating system. • Dr. Smith runs a poorly operating laboratory.
Do not hyphenate a foreign phrase or more than one word when it is being used as a modifier.	• ex officio member • post mortem evaluation • ante bellum era
Do not hyphenate a two-word modifier that has a letter or numeral as the second element.	• page 2 revisions • World War II related injuries
Do not hyphenate a compound ending in –like unless the first element is a proper (capitalized) name or unless a triple consonant will be formed.	• Lifelike • Tylenol-like
Do not hyphenate words beginning with non- unless the word following non-is a proper (capitalized) noun or is itself a hyphenated word.	• Nonradioactive • non-federal • non-high-pressure

Use Consistent Terminology

Incorrect	Correct
E-Mail	email
Off-line, On-line	offline, online
url	URL
Web, WebMaster, Web Master	web, webmaster
Data-base, Data Base	database
Sub-committee, sub committee	subcommittee
Healthcare, Childcare	health care, child care
Long term/short term	long-term, short-term

Punctuation

Apostrophes

Guidelines	Example
Use an apostrophe and the letter "s" to form a possessive noun. Do not use 's to form the plural of an abbreviation or number. *Note:* When writing Dr. Collins' name as a possessive noun, do not add an "s" at the end.	• We will issue many RFPs this year. • The size 10s and 12s are on the rack. • Dr. Collins' lecture is expected to start on time.
Some acronyms are inherently plural or may be either singular or plural. MIS may be singular (management information system) or plural (management information system).	• An MIS is being installed in the Office of the Director. • Several MIS are already installed elsewhere on campus.

Commas

Guideline	Example
Though some style manuals now sanction the omission of the serial comma, it *is our practice to use the serial (Oxford) comma in official correspondence*. However, be consistent in its usage and be sure to use it where it is needed to avoid ambiguity.	red, white, and green (not red, white and green).
Use a comma before the conjunction (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet) when joining two simple sentences (i.e., independent, stand-alone clauses).	• He arrived early, but the party had already begun. • I asked Bill about the status of the presentation, and he said he was almost finished.
Do not use a comma before a conjunction if it joins two predicates (i.e., no subject).	• He arrived early **but** waited outside. • We built the treehouse **and** painted it.
Which and other words that introduce nonessential clauses are always preceded (and followed, if appropriate) by a comma. That introduces a restrictive or essential clause and is never preceded by a comma.	• I enjoyed the apples, which are my favorite fruit. • Fred, who is often late for work, was reprimanded again today. • I lost the book that I borrowed from you. • I wish that spring would get here soon.
Place the comma inside quotation marks.	• "That is correct," he said. • Items labeled "1," "2," and "3" should be deleted.

Guideline	Example
Add a comma after a complete date Add a comma after the city and state when they are used together.	• The meeting will be held on November 3, 2013, in Bethesda, MD. • The 2014 meeting will be in Boston, MA, next fall.
Do not use a comma when only the month and year are given. Do not use a comma when only a city or state is given.	• The first meeting will be held in April 2013. • The next meeting will be held in Boston in September 2014. • Jan moved to Maryland in May 2002.
Use a comma before (and after, if applicable) Jr., M.D., Ph.D., etc., but not before II, III, IV, etc.	• Sammy Davis, Jr., performed at the event. • John Smith, Ph.D., will give the opening remarks. • Henry XIII was injured in the tournament.
In general, do not use a comma between nouns that modify each other.	• The musical comedy is sold out. • They lived in a white frame house.

Ellipses

Guideline	Example
Use an ellipsis, which are three periods (...), to indicate when words have been omitted within a quotation.	In his speech at Gettysburg, Lincoln said, "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation ... dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."
In general, words omitted in an ellipsis should be from within a single sentence, so that the sense of the original language is not lost. If you are omitting words from the end of a quoted sentence, include the period, marking the end of the sentence, as a fourth dot in the ellipsis. In this case, do not leave a space before the ellipsis.	Abraham Lincoln's most famous speech begins, "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation...."

Periods

Guideline	Example
Use the period consistently in honorifics (Ms., Dr., etc.) and in academic degrees (Ph.D., M.D., etc.).	• Jane R. Smith, Ph.D., M.D. • Dr. Jane R. Smith

Guideline	Example
Align the periods (as well as colons) accompanying numerals in a list.	I. 8. 8:30 II. 9. 10:15 III. 10. 12:15

Quotation Marks

Guideline	Example
Short quotations are set off by quotation marks within the text.	• Dr. Smith asked, "What is the next item on the agenda?" • There was a brief delay while the Chairman consulted his notes. "We will consider Dr. Robinson's request to attend the next meeting," the Chairman finally responded.
Always place quotation marks outside periods and commas.	• "We need more volunteers," the researcher explained. • The television reporter said, "And that's the news for today."
Placement of quotation marks with question marks and exclamation points depends on whether the question or emphasis is part of the quotation.	• The lecturer asked, "Are there any questions?" • What do you mean, "almost accurate"? • She said, "Hurry up!"
Quotations of three lines or longer should be indented five spaces (½-inch if not using a 10-characters-per-inch font) from the left margin. Use quotation marks at the beginning and end of the quotation. If the quotation is two or more paragraphs in length, place opening quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph and closing quotation marks at the end of only the last paragraph.	N/A

Grammar

Split Infinitives

Guideline	Example
An infinitive is the base form of a verb with the word "to" in front, e.g., *to sleep, to wash, to help.* Avoid splitting an infinitive (e.g., to rapidly run), unless the meaning will be distorted otherwise. **Avoid using "also" to split an infinitive.**	• She asked him to leave the room quickly. • She asked him to quickly leave the room. • She also will run the marathon. (Incorrect: She will also run the marathon).

Possessive Pronouns Preceding A Gerund

Guideline	Example
A gerund is a verb that ends with –*ing* (running, singing, reading) and that functions as a noun. A pronoun preceding a gerund is most often in the possessive case, for example:	• John's leaving is unfortunate. • He objected to my asking a question.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Explanation	Example
It is clear that "his" refers to President Lincoln	President Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address in 1863.
It is unclear to which "they" (dirt and blood or the glass vessels) the writer is referring.	Dirt and blood cannot penetrate glass vessels, nor are they affected by heat.

Pronoun Case

The form of a pronoun depends on its function within a sentence. Used as the subject of a verb, a pronoun must be in the nominative case. As the object of a verb or preposition, or as the subject of an infinitive, a pronoun must be in the objective case.

Explanation	Example
Me is the object of between.	The disagreement is between you and me**.**
Me is the object of to.	Bill gave the samples to John and me.
Whom is the object of saw in the clause "I saw [whom]."	Mary is the one whom I saw in the lab.
Who is the subject of was in the clause "[who] was in the lab."	Mary is the one who we thought was in the lab
Whoever is the subject of is in the clause "whoever is the owner."	Give it to whoever is the owner.

Structure

Use Parallel Construction

Arrange sentences so that parallel ideas look parallel. This is especially important when you use a list.

Incorrect	Correct
The duties of the Chair are: • to approve minutes • writing of monthly reports • the Chair answers letter	The duties of the Chair are to: • approve the minutes • write the monthly reports • answer all correspondence

Be Direct

Talk directly to your readers. Use imperatives when appropriate. This is especially true for lists of duties, instructions, procedures, and regulations.

Instead of…	Use…
All copies of the application must be signed.	Sign all copies of the application.

Avoid Using Exceptions

Instead of…	Use…
All persons except those 18 years or older...	All persons under 18 years of age…

Avoid Unnecessary Words

Instead of…	Use…
At the present time....	Now
first annual....	first (until a "second annual has happened")
In order to...	To
In the event that...	If
No later than…	By
Take steps to…	Do not use this phrase
As a result of....	Because
For the purposes of...	To
I would like to....	Say what you mean!
very, really, literally, certainly	DO NOT USE intensifying modifiers
Prior to...	Before

Avoid Redundant Phrases

Phrase	Explanation
Both...as well as	Choose one or the other
In addition to...also	They mean the same thing
And also	Redundant
Close scrutiny	By definition, all scrutiny is close
Advance planning	All planning is in advance
Major breakthrough	All breakthroughs are major
New innovation	By definition, innovations are always new
Invited guests	Usually, all guests are invited
But nevertheless	Use one or the other of these words, not both
On the occasion when	Use "On the occasion of" or "when" (when is much more direct)
True fact	By definition, facts are true
Eliminate altogether	By definition, 'to eliminate' gets rid of all of something

Phrase	Explanation
Fill to capacity	By definition, to fill something means to reach its capacity
Blue in color	Context should indicate whether you are referring to mood or color
"Very" before anything	Avoid intensive modifiers.

Other Tips

Abbreviations & Acronyms

Guideline	Example
Except as noted below, do not use abbreviations in official correspondence.	***Incorrect****:* The timing of the report is still TBD. ***Correct****:* The timing of the report is still to-be-determined.
You may abbreviate honorifics (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr.), academic degrees (like M.D., Ph.D., or R.N.), or religious orders (S.J., for example) appearing with a person's name, whether in the correspondence or on the envelope.	Use "Dr. Jane Smith" instead of "Doctor Jane Smith."
When addressing envelopes, spell out the names of U.S. states and Canadian provinces in the inside address (except use DC instead of spelling out District of Columbia). Use two spaces between the state and the zip code.	123 Main Street Centerville, Ohio 45429 456 Constitution Avenue Washington, DC 20002
Spell out United States when used as a noun but abbreviate it (U.S.) as an adjective.	• The United States is a very large country. • The U.S. research organization is highly regarded by the international community.

Capitalization
Refer to the GPO Style Manual for questions of capitalization not covered in the points below.

Guideline	Example
Spell out fiscal year (lower case) for first time use and use capitals for FY for all future uses.	The FY13 budget was never approved. The budget for fiscal year 2014 is almost complete.

Guideline	Example

	When referring to the President's Budget request for given year:
	
	  1) Budget is always capitalized
	  2) Always use full year – i.e.. FY 2021

Do not capitalize *federal, state, tribe*, or *nation* if used generically and not part of a proper noun or title. Do not capitalize words *congressional, members, government, department, departmental, agency*, and *local* except in titles. Capitalize the stand-alone word *Department* only when referring specifically to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.	• Some federal regulations focus on the nation's public lands. • The state-owned park was near the lake. • The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is the largest domestic agency. • The department of energy held a discussion on the energy crisis, and several members of Congress attended the event. • The Department announced the national prevention initiative last week in the Great Hall.
Capitalize federal, state, tribe, or nation when they are part of a title.	• The Federal Election Commission. • State Department employees the Oglala Sioux Tribe.
Do not capitalize the word *state* when it refers to the proper name of a state previously mentioned.	The State of Alaska is the largest state in the nation.
Always capitalize *President* when referring to the President of the United States. Capitalize the word *Administration* when referring to the federal executive branch serving under a specific president.	• The Trump Administration followed the second Obama Administration. • These are examples of two presidential administrations.
Use uppercase when referring to parts of a document.	• Chapter 8 • Table 3
Use uppercase for specific geographical identifications.	• the West • the Deep South • the Middle East • Metropolitan Washington
Use lowercase for non-specific geographical identifications or when indicating direction.	• southern California • the bay area • the east coast (or east coast as a modifier) • Washington metropolitan area

Guideline	Example
Use uppercase for trade names.	Plexiglas, Velcro, Xerox, Kleenex
Use uppercase for a title preceding or following a name.	- President Washington - George Washington, President of the United States
Use uppercase when a title refers to a specific individual(s).	- The Director, NIH - The IC Directors - The Chair
Use lowercase for generic titles.	The function of the chair is to call meetings to order. **Note**: See [Section 3 -](#) Congressional section for more details on how to use "chair" in Congressional titles.
Use lowercase for seasons of the year.	spring, summer, fall (or autumn), winter
Use uppercase for racial or ethnic groups.	- We hope to determine why more Blacks than Whites are affected by the disease. - We have a strong program to recruit Asian and Hispanic volunteers.

Contractions

Guideline	Example
Contractions are fine for informal use but should normally be avoided in official correspondence. If in doubt about whether to use a contraction, you probably should not use it.	*Incorrect:* The Director can't attend the meeting. *Correct:* The Director cannot attend the meeting.

Dates

Guideline	Example
Use the American, not military or European (format of month, day, and year), unless sending an international letter. Spell out the month.	*Incorrect:* 4/3/13 Apr. 3, 2013 *Correct:* April 3, 2013

Guideline	Example
Do not use –st, -nd, -rd, or –th with dates.	***Incorrect***: The May 10th meeting was cancelled. *Correct:* The meeting will be held on May 10.
Do not include the year, if it is obvious.	*Incorrect:* For a letter dated in February, 2019: *Incorrect:* "Our October 2019 meeting was productive...." *Correct:* For a letter dated March 25: "Thank you for your January 10 inquiry..."

Dividing names or dates between lines

Guideline	Example
Do not divide a date between lines. If an entire date will not fit at the end of a line, begin the date on the next line down.	*Incorrect:* The Director will attend the March 29, 2019 event. *Correct:* The Director will attend the March 29, 2019, event.
Avoid dividing a person's name (including honorific and degree) between lines. If you must type a name partly on one line and partly on the next, the person's last name must begin the new line using a line break (press <Shift>+<Enter> in Word). Use hard spaces and hard hyphens when writing names, dates, titles, etc. so that information flows in a readable way.	*Incorrect:* The Director named Sam R. Armstrong, Ph.D., M.D., as the next IC Director. *Correct:* The Director named Samantha R. Armstrong, Ph.D., M.D., as the next IC Director.

Numbers

Guideline	Example
Spell out numbers zero through nine. Use numerals for numbers 10 or greater.	• We have already spoken to three members of the committee. • The committee comprises 16 members.
If three or more numbers appear in a sentence and at least one of them is greater than nine, use a numeral for	• There are 11 men and 5 women on the committee.

Guideline	Example
each, except when one of the numbers reflects a unit money, time, or measurement.	• There are eight men and nine women on the committee. • Eight men and nine women paid $15 to attend the conference.
Avoid beginning a sentence with a numeral; rearrange the sentence if possible. If you must begin a sentence with a number, spell it out.	• Acceptable: Twelve of the 16 members are doctors. • Preferred: Of the 16 members, 12 are doctors
Always use numerals for units of money, time, or measurement.	• 5 liters • 3 mg • 5 years • $214 • also $3,500, but $6 million • 2- or 3-inch sticks • 7 percent

Symbols

Guideline	Example
Avoid the use of symbols in correspondence. The dollar sign ($) may be used.	• 25 percent (not 25%) • 145 degrees Celsius (not 145º C) • $3 million

Editing Checklist

Below is a checklist for common writing mistakes. Please use this checklist to review all correspondence and documents for these commonly missed errors.

Content and Word Use

- ✓ Avoid using the passive voice.
    - o **Correct:** We sent the memo to all staff.
    - o **Incorrect:** The memo was sent to all staff.
- ✓ When using an acronym, spell it out and defined it the first time it is used in the document (i.e., "The National Institutes of Health (NIH)"). Only use the acronym if it is used multiple times in the document.
- ✓ Check to see that the following are spelled or punctuated correctly: U.S., email, online, website, long-term, short-term, database, and subcommittee.
- ✓ Spell out and underline any website addresses, but do not use http// (for example, use **www.nih.gov**), and open the link to ensure it is correct.
- ✓ Remove any uses of "impact" as a verb.
- ✓ Use parallel structure throughout the document.
    - o **Correct:** NIH supports research to prevent, diagnose, and treat cancer.
    - o **Incorrect:** NIH supports research for preventing, diagnosing, and to treat cancer.
- ✓ Spell out numbers zero through nine, rather than using the numeral. Use numerals for numbers 10 and above.
- ✓ Hyphenate words that form a compound modifier preceding a noun. Examples: the well-read child, the university-educated employee, the NIH-employed researcher.

Punctuation & Format

- ✓ Use a colon after the salutation, rather than a comma. Example: "Dear Dr. Smith:"
- ✓ Use serial commas correctly.
    - o **Correct:** "red, white, and blue"
    - o **Incorrect:** "red, white and blue"
- ✓ When writing out a full date, follow the year with a comma. Example: The House voted on July 2, 2013, on the legislation.
- ✓ Place punctuation *inside* the quotation mark. Example: The conference is called "Future Careers in Science."
- ✓ Italicize book titles or journal article titles, rather than underlining them.
- ✓ Punctuate "Ph.D." and "M.D." correctly.

✓ Do not capitalize the words federal, congressional, members, government, department, agency, local, or nation. Capitalize Federal Government when used as a formal noun.

✓ Capitalize the stand-alone word "Department," only when referring specifically to HHS or another executive branch department.

✓ Capitalize President and Administration when referring to the current U.S. President and his/her Administration or a past administration.

✓ Spell out the name of the state in the address block of the letter, and elsewhere in the body of the letter, rather than using the two-letter state abbreviation. Use the state abbreviation on the envelope. The exception is the District of Columbia, which is always "DC."

✓ On a letter's internal address block, specify the person's degrees when applicable, rather than just using "Dr. John Smith."

  o **Correct:** John Smith, M.D.

         123 Elm Street

         Anytown, Maryland 21702

  o Note that "Dr." does <u>not</u> precede the name above since John Smith's degree (M.D.) was used. Two spaces are used between the state and zip code.

Section 5: How does NIH Manage Clearances?

How to Respond to a Clearance Request

NIH Exec Sec clears all policy materials (e.g. Decision Memos) for the NIH Director's and Deputy Director's approval, NIH Director and Principal Deputy Correspondence, and most other items for their approval and signature (e.g. HR packages). During the clearance process, ES PAs work with specific ICOs to review these documents to ensure their accuracy, quality, legality, and conformance with NIH policy and mission.

NIH Exec Sec is responsible for facilitating the clearance of high-priority, internal NIH documents as well as external documents from other agencies and offices. NIH Exec Sec will forward these documents via SAAVI to your office for official clearance. The Exec Sec Liaison in each office is responsible for distributing the document to the appropriate Subject Matter Experts and ICO leadership for their review.

NIH Exec Sec handles the clearance of internal NIH documents that are reviewed and approved by the NIH Director or NIH Deputy Director, and other high-profile documents on a case-by-case basis. If your ICO has a document that requires inter-NIH clearance and you believe it should be handled by the NIH Exec Sec office, please contact your ES PA for further guidance.

NIH Exec Sec also receives requests for clearance of documents from a variety of external sources, including but not limited to: the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Executive Secretariat, HHS Division Offices, HHS-sister agencies such as the CDC and FDA, and the White House. Documents often include HHS Decision Memos, correspondence to be signed by the Secretary, Reports to Congress, major policy documents, and other high-profile documents. For external clearances, we often have no control over the deadlines, which may be expedited, and in most cases extensions are not granted.

When reviewing a document submitted in SAAVI for clearance, ICOs have four options:

1. **Concur**
   Clear the document without any changes.

2. **Concur with Comments**
   Offer substantive or editorial changes that your ICO believes would substantively improve the document. When submitting comments, see the "Good Practices" section below to review the appropriate format.

3. **No Opinion**
   An ICO should select "no opinion" if (1) it does not have a programmatic need to review the document; or (2) it has not received an extension and believes it does not have sufficient time to review the document. Use this option only in limited

circumstances; your reasoning should be communicated to your ES PA as soon as possible.

4. **Non-Concur**
   This signals that NIH Exec Sec should not send the document forward for approval until the authoring office has addressed significant comments. You should only respond with a non-concur if your ICO has overall concerns with the entire document, or strongly disagrees with a particular aspect or policy direction of the document. NOTE: if you are submitting a non-concur on an external clearance (HHS, White House, etc.), the NIH Principal Deputy Director must approve the non-concur before submission. The NIH Principal Deputy Director reserves the right to modify the non-concur to a concur with comments if deemed appropriate. See Section 2 for more information.

Tips for Clearing Documents

Review all documents carefully. Look for factual errors, consistency with NIH statements and policy, any legal concerns, and technical accuracy. Style edits are helpful, but substantive contributions are much more important. Make sure to review all documents sent in the clearance in SAAVI; often there is more than one document we are asking you to review.

- **Check to see if others should clear the document**
  Inform the ES PA immediately if you believe Exec Sec should add a critical ICO to the clearance process.

- **Settle policy disputes early**
  Raise significant concerns with a document early, and whenever possible, before submitting a non-concurrence. Contact the appropriate ES PA to discuss having a separate call, as necessary, with the authoring ICO to address the comments and facilitate resolution.

- **Be specific**
  Make sure your comments are clear and specific. Vague comments are difficult to understand and to incorporate. If you have a question about a policy issue in a decision memo, be precise in presenting your question to the authoring ICO. If you think wording in a letter is unclear, suggest specific changes to make it clearer.

- **Submit unified comments in a single document**
  Submit all comments at the same time, with all comments from different offices or branches of an ICO compiled into a single document as a unified position. If the ICO feels it is important to present different viewpoints from other offices, the ICO should discuss this in advance with the ES PA.

- **Meet deadlines**
  NIH Exec Sec establishes clearance deadlines by taking into account any external deadlines (such as from HHS or the White House), the availability of senior leadership to also review, as necessary, the length of the document, and other milestones associated with finalizing the document. For general guidelines regarding correspondence deadlines, see Section 2. You should build in time for internal review by your reviewer (normally a senior leader in ICO) to clear the comments. A request for an extension should be done under rare circumstances. If an ICO does not feel it can meet a deadline, it should bring it to the ES PA's attention as soon as possible. Repeated requests for extensions will be flagged for OD leadership.

- **Ensure your comments/submission conforms to the requested format**
  See the section below for specifics. Depending on the source of the clearance, we may request comments in a narrative form or in a required template. Please review instructions associated with the document(s) before submitting comments in SAAVI. All ICO comments should be consolidated into a single document in advance of submission to NIH Exec Sec.

- **Be aware of policies on subsequent rounds of clearance**
  Generally, only ICOs that provide comments to the first round of clearance will see future rounds of the document, either as a clearance or as information only. Exceptions include when an ICO has requested that NIH Exec Sec include them on all subsequent clearances or when the ES PA deems the ICO's further review appropriate. An ICO that does not provide comments or concurs without comment may request to see future rounds of clearance by contacting the appropriate ES PA.

Good Practices for Clearance Actions

Good Practices for External Clearance Actions

Always carefully read the instructions in the remarks section or accompanying memo. Some external clearances require comments provided in a specific format (e.g. an Excel sheet, etc.). However, if no guidance is provided, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Please read the instructions in SAAVI, specifically regarding how to submit your comments. Redline comments are generally accepted unless the instructions specify otherwise. Some clearances require comments to be submitted in a specific format or template, and if the comments submitted are not in the requested format, they will be sent back for revision.

- Include the Page #, Paragraph #, and Line # (if available) for all comments listed.

- Do **NOT** use first person in your comments (i.e. "I think this sentence should be removed"). Comments should be drafted to be from your ICO and not from a specific individual (comments should read "NINDS believes that this sentence should be revised", not "Dr. Smith believes…').

- **Note:** if multiple SMEs review the document, the ES Liaison is responsible for compiling those comments into a single document, with a single "voice" from the Institute. **Do not just copy and paste the separate comments into a document** (for example, don't list Dr. Smith's comments and then Dr. Armstrong's comments; they should be merged into a single response from the ICO).

- If you suggest a revision, please include how the language should be revised.

It is extremely important that you work to meet all external clearance deadlines – NIH Exec Sec often does not have any flexibility concerning deadlines set by HHS or the White House. NIH Exec Sec often needs to leave room in the clearance timeline to allow for further leadership review and clearance by the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director. If you anticipate being unable to meet a deadline, please contact the appropriate ES PA as soon as possible.

Good Practices for Internal Clearances

Depending on the clearance, redline comments may be accepted. Please always refer to the Remarks section in SAAVI for specific instructions about the format for comments; the ES PA will include a note whether redline, narrative, or other formats will be accepted.

You may list the individual SMEs who commented on the document so that if there are questions the originating ICO can contact the specific person, however, the comments should still be reviewed prior to submission to ensure consistency.

If there are major concerns with a clearance document, please contact the appropriate ES PA, who can help facilitate a discussion between the clearing office and the authoring office.

Section 6: How does NIH handle the Director's Meetings and Invitations?

NIH Exec Sec is also responsible for managing the NIH Director's meeting materials and processing invitations for the NIH Director and Principal Deputy Director. However, please note, that the NIH Director's and Principal Deputy Director's scheduling is managed through the Immediate Office of the Director (IMOD). Please contact IMOD to request internal meetings and for questions regarding the NIH Director's and Principal Deputy Director's calendars.

How to submit NIH Director's Meetings Materials

One of NIH Exec Sec's most important responsibilities is to provide materials to the NIH Director in preparation for the many meetings and events he attends on a daily basis. When a meeting is scheduled on the NIH Director's calendar, NIH Exec Sec will review the meeting to determine the appropriate point-of-contact in the relevant ICO. NIH Exec Sec will reach out, via an email assignment, to the relevant POC to request the meeting materials and a due date.

To provide the meeting materials to the NIH Director in a timely manner, we ask you to submit all materials to NIH Exec Sec by the established deadline, normally **3:00 pm two business days before a scheduled meeting**. However, we may establish an alternative deadline based on the NIH Director and Principal Deputy Director's schedules and other factors. If your office is unable to meet the deadline, you must let NIH Exec Sec know as soon as possible, so we can inform IMOD that the materials will be arriving late.

All meeting materials for the NIH Director should be routed through NIH Exec Sec to ensure the most comprehensive, concise, and up-to-date version of materials is provided. To facilitate your submissions, NIH Exec Sec has established a dedicated email address specifically for Director's Meeting Materials, NIHDirectorMeetings@mail.nih.gov. NIH Exec Sec will issue requests for meeting materials from this address and request that you transmit materials to us using that address. If materials are provided directly to the NIH Director via email, please copy NIHDirectorMeetings@mail.nih.gov on that email.

Each request for meeting materials will include a cover sheet entitled, "NIH Director Meeting Materials" (see Appendix 8), requesting specific information including: the purpose of the meeting and agenda; background on issue(s) to be discussed; discussion/talking points; and a list of the attachments.

Before your ICO responds that there are no materials for a meeting or event, please think broadly about what would be helpful to the NIH Director. Meeting materials may not always mean a formal briefing paper or presentation; they might be recent updates or bullets to outline a planned discussion. For meetings initiated by the NIH Director, the NIH Exec Sec may request that you provide the cover sheet, including background or talking points for his consideration in advance of the meeting.

Assignments to Vet Invitations and Sending Invitations

NIH Exec Sec also manages the review of all invitations sent to the NIH Director and Principal Deputy Director. NIH Exec Sec is responsible for logging the invitations in SAAVI, vetting them with the appropriate ICO, and preparing them for review by the NIH Director and Principal Deputy Director. Once it is determined whether the invitation will be accepted or not, NIH Exec Sec is also responsible for notifying recipients when the invitation is declined. If the invitation is accepted, the NIH Director's and Principal Deputy Director's schedulers will contact the organizers regarding the event and formally accept on their behalf.

If your ICO would like to send a formal invitation to the NIH Director, please submit the invitation to Exec Sec via email at NIHDirectorInvitations@nih.gov for the NIH Director's consideration.

APPENDICES

> ## APPENDIX 1:
> ## Correspondence Template

January 1, 2020

Jane P. Doe, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Microbiology and
    Infectious Diseases
University of Maryland
123 Main Street, Room 777
College Park, Maryland 20742-0000

Re: Grant Proposal 111-222

Dear Dr. Doe:

Thank you for your letter to Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), concerning NIH's research on the rare disease you are studying.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. Maecenas porttitor congue massa. Fusce posuere, magna sed pulvinar ultricies, purus lectus malesuada libero, sit amet commodo magna eros quis urna. Nunc viverra imperdiet enim. Fusce est. Vivamus a tellus. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Proin pharetra nonummy pede. Mauris et orci. Aenean nec lorem. In porttitor. Donec laoreet nonummy augue.

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You can find information regarding NIH's funding on our website at www.nih.gov. Thank you for your letter and your continued support of the NIH.
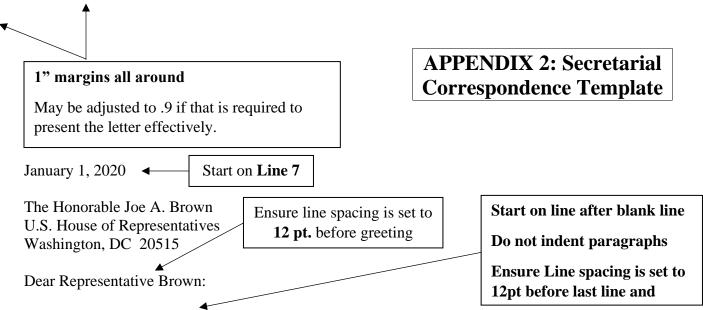
Sincerely,

Michael S. Smith, M.D., Ph.D.
Associate Director, NIH, for Microbiology
 and Rare Diseases

Enclosures:
Summary of NIH Funding
List of NIH Grants

Separate Cover:
Instructions to Apply for NIH Funding

cc:
David M. Jones, M.D., Ph.D., Director, Association of Microbiology

1" margins all around

May be adjusted to .9 if that is required to present the letter effectively.

January 1, 2020 ← Start on **Line 7**

The Honorable Joe A. Brown
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Ensure line spacing is set to **12 pt.** before greeting

Start on line after blank line

Do not indent paragraphs

Ensure Line spacing is set to 12pt before last line and

Dear Representative Brown:

Thank you for your letter regarding the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) research on the rare disease you are studying.

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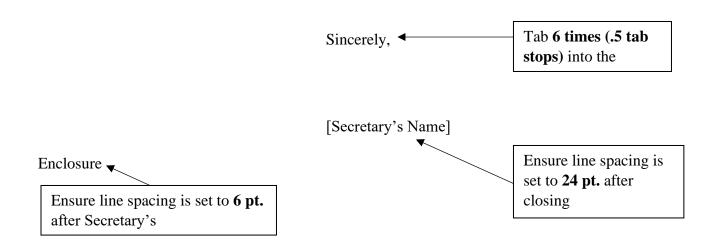
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Suspendisse dui purus, scelerisque at, vulputate vitae, pretium mattis, nunc. Mauris eget neque at sem venenatis eleifend. Ut nonummy.

Thank you for your interest in and support of NIH this rare disease. I hope this information is helpful [in responding to your constituent]. An identical response has been sent to the co-signers of your letter [this sentence can be included for incoming letters that have multiple signatories].

Sincerely,

Tab **6 times (.5 tab stops)** into the

[Secretary's Name]

Ensure line spacing is set to **24 pt.** after closing

Enclosure

Ensure line spacing is set to **6 pt.** after Secretary's

> **APPENDIX 3:**
> **Congressional**
> **Correspondence Template**

January 1, 2020

The Honorable Janette Armstrong
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Armstrong:

Thank you for your letter to Dr. John Jackson, Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), regarding NIH's research on this rare disease. As the Director of the Office of Disease Research, I am pleased to respond to your letter.

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habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Proin pharetra nonummy pede. Mauris et orci. Aenean nec lorem. In porttitor. Donec laoreet nonummy augue. Suspendisse dui purus, scelerisque at, vulputate vitae, pretium mattis, nunc. Mauris eget neque at sem venenatis eleifend. Ut nonummy.

Thank you for your interest in and support of research on this rare disease. I hope this information is helpful [in responding to your constituent]. An identical response has been sent to the co-signers of your letter [this sentence can be included for incoming letters that have multiple signatories].

Sincerely,

Marcia S. Smith, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, Office of Disease Research

APPENDIX 4: NIH Memo
Template

DATE: January 1, 2019

TO: Mary J. Thompson, M.D., Ph.D.
Principal Deputy Director, National Institutes of Health

THROUGH: Sally Brown, M.D.
Deputy Director for Research, National Institutes of Health _____

FROM: Director, Office of Disease Research, National Institutes of Health

SUBJECT: Request to Approve New Disease Research Grant Policy – DECISION

ISSUE

The Office of Disease Research requests that you approve a new grant policy regarding disease research priorities.

DISCUSSION

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habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Proin pharetra nonummy pede. Mauris et orci. Aenean nec lorem. In porttitor. Donec laoreet nonummy augue. Suspendisse dui purus, scelerisque at, vulputate vitae, pretium mattis, nunc. Mauris eget neque at sem venenatis eleifend. Ut nonummy.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend you approve the new disease research grant policy.

                                         Marcia S. Smith, M.D., Ph.D.

DECISION

The new disease research grant policy is:

Approved _____   Disapproved _____   Need More Information _____

_____   _____
Mary J. Thompson, M.D., Ph.D.   Date

Attachments
Attachment A: Current Disease Research Grant Policy
Attachment B: Background Material 1

National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be **1 inch**.

APPENDIX 5: NIH
Format Tips

Space down six lines from the top to the line with "**DATE**:"

DATE: April 1, 2021

TO: John Jackson M.D., Ph.D.
                   Director, National Institutes of Health

THROUGH: Mary J. Thompson, M.D., Ph.D.
                   Principal Deputy Director, National Institutes of Health _____

The headings should be **left justified** and the text should be aligned.

                   Sally Brown, M.D.
                   Deputy Director for Research, National Institutes of Health _____

FROM: Director, Office of Disease Research, National Institutes of Health

SUBJECT: Request to Approve New Disease Research Grant Policy – DECISION

Two lines in between subject and issue.

ISSUE

The Office of Disease Research requests that you approve a new grant policy regarding Disease research priorities.

DISCUSSION

Headings should be **capitalized**, **bolded**, and **underlined**.

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Include a header, with the **name** and **page number**. *NOTE:* This is a different format than a Secretarial memo format (see Appendix 6).

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Option 1:

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Option 2:

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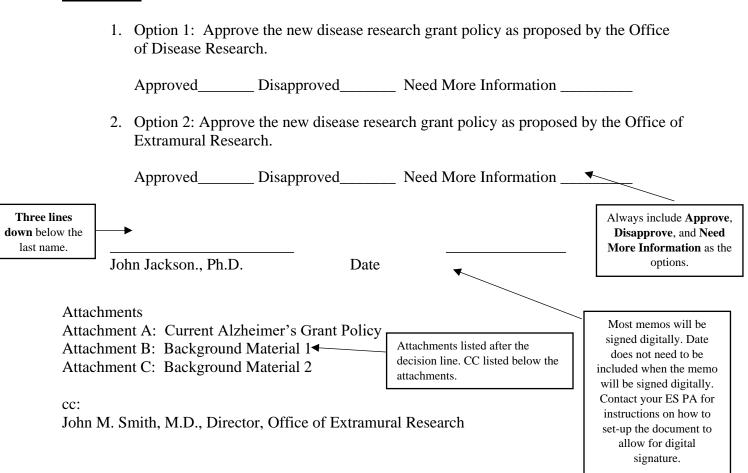
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RECOMMENDATION

I recommend you approve Option 1 of the new disease research grant policy.

Three lines down, **six tabs in** type the signer's name. It should be signed above.

Marcia S. Smith, M.D., Ph.D.

DECISION

1. Option 1: Approve the new disease research grant policy as proposed by the Office of Disease Research.

   Approved_____ Disapproved_____ Need More Information _____

2. Option 2: Approve the new disease research grant policy as proposed by the Office of Extramural Research.

   Approved_____ Disapproved_____ Need More Information _____

Three lines down below the last name.

Always include **Approve**, **Disapprove**, and **Need More Information** as the options.

_____   _____
John Jackson., Ph.D.   Date

Attachments
Attachment A: Current Alzheimer's Grant Policy
Attachment B: Background Material 1
Attachment C: Background Material 2

Attachments listed after the decision line. CC listed below the attachments.

Most memos will be signed digitally. Date does not need to be included when the memo will be signed digitally. Contact your ES PA for instructions on how to set-up the document to allow for digital signature.

cc:
John M. Smith, M.D., Director, Office of Extramural Research

APPENDIX 6: Secretarial Decision Memo Template

DATE: Month Day, Year

TO: Xavier Becerra, Secretary

Through: [Add option for Deputy Secretary; Chief of Staff; Counselor]
Karuna Seshasai, Executive Secretary

FROM: Division Head Name, Title

SUBJECT: DECISION - Write Subject Here

ACTION REQUESTED

[One or two sentences to clearly state the purpose of the memo, whether it is requesting the Secretary's policy decision, signature, approval on a course of action, etc.]

RECOMMENDATION

[The OpDivs/StaffDivs recommendation should include a concise justification for its recommendation; a summary of any notable timing factors; reference to any notable comments from other OpDivs/StaffDivs or other stakeholders.]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[Include only pertinent information about the origin and background.]

Notable Timing Factors:
[Enter text here, such as statutory or regulatory deadline; request from Congressional or other stakeholders; litigation; etc.]

Noteworthy Elements about Equity:
[Describe how the action will promote equity for individuals belonging to groups that have been historically underserved, marginalized, or subject to discrimination or systemic disadvantage, including those referenced in EO 13985 (*Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*).

Include the action's likely impacts on individuals from such groups, including intersectional impacts for individuals belonging to more than one such group. Highlight any gaps in evidence or data that prevent a full assessment of these impacts.

Indicate the degree to which affected groups and/or their representatives were or will be consulted in formulating the action. Include any other information pertinent to the Secretary's and the Administration's equity priorities.]

OPTIONS AND DISCUSSION

[Discuss only those options the Secretary needs to consider, which should generally include only two or three well-developed options]

Option [1/2/3]: [concise statement]

Discussion: [Information could include individuals who and/or entities that would benefit from the chosen option, those adversely affected, anticipated reaction, budgetary impact; timing; etc. This section could also include any significant comments from other OpDivs/StaffDivs.]

Key Pros: [use bullet points]

Key Cons: [use bullet points]

ANTICIPATED REACTION

[HHS: This section should note any OpDivs/StaffDivs who may have a stake in this decision. If applicable, this section should also include information about whether this decision is on a novel issue and/or innovating on prior Department work.

External: This section should include anticipated reaction from stakeholders, including Congressional members; White House; other Departments; states and local governments; industry; general public; etc.]

ROLLOUT

[Should include anticipated timing, if known, along with the actual rollout plan.]

_____

/S/ Division Head

DECISION
[Restatement of Recommended Decision]

Approved [   ]
Disapproved [   ]
Briefing Needed [   ]
Additional Comments:

_____
/S/ Xavier Becerra   Date

Attachments
TAB A: Document for Signature
TAB B: Any Additional Background Information (can be multiple tabs if needed)

DATE: Month xx, Year (E.G. March 21, 2021)

TO: [Enter text here] (E.g. Secretary Xavier Becerra)

THROUGH: (this should include the relevant counselor who signed off)

FROM: [Enter text here]

SUBJECT: [Enter text here]

Details
What:
Date: [Month] [Day], [Year]
Time: (Example: 10:00-10:30am ET)
Location: (Include Zoom/Webex/Microsoft Teams link and passcode if applicable)
Call: Indicate if this is a phone call. If not, please remove this section.
Internal or External Event: [Enter text here]
- Note/list of any items such as talking points, biographies, materials that will be attached below.

HHS Staff: (add names of staff accompanying him, if applicable, along with their title)
Press: Yes or No (include who if known)

Topic:

[Enter text here]

Objective:

[Enter text here]

Secretary's Role:

[Enter text here]

Secretary's Message (if applicable):

[Enter text here]

Acknowledgements (if applicable):

[Enter text here]

List of Participants:

[Enter text here]

<u>Agenda</u>:

Time: Introduction – Name of Presenter (Agency)
Time: Item – Name of Presenter (Agency)
Time: Item – Name of Presenter (Agency)
Time: Discussion

<u>Background</u>:

[Enter text here, including who requested the meeting]

<u>Attachments</u>:

1. Talking Points
2. Bios for Non-HHS/USG Meeting Participants
3. Any additional materials

APPENDIX 8: NIH Director Meeting Materials Template

Meeting Title:

Date & Time:

Participants (in addition to the Director):

Meeting Requested By:

Purpose and Agenda:

Brief statement of purpose and an agenda, if applicable.

Background on Issue(s) To Be Discussed:

Short summary, 3-4 sentences.

Discussion Points/Talking Points, if Appropriate:

- *TIP: Use concise bullets*

Table of Contents for Background/Briefing Materials:

- ***Please list any additional materials you are providing.*** *This may include bios, PowerPoint presentations, relevant correspondence, supplemental information, etc.*

APPENDIX 9: Correspondence Workflow Process

This description details how NIH Exec manages a general piece of correspondence addressed to the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director. Please keep in mind that steps two through five occur in SAAVI. This is only a brief description of the most common workflow of the office and does not include special correspondence such as presidential proclamations, White House correspondence, or Secretarial correspondence. For specific guidance, please see Section 2.

1. Correspondence arrives at the NIH Exec Sec office through U.S. postal mail, OD personnel, fax, email, or the Secretary's Policy System (SPS). (Note: the SPS is an online document tracking system used and maintained by OS).

2. After an initial screening, NIH Exec Sec staff enter digital copies of the correspondence and metadata into the NIH Exec Sec electronic database processing system and creates as a work folder. See the SAAVI section below for more information.

3. Staff then forward the work folder to the Deputy Director or a Senior ES PA for review, and they assign to the appropriate ES PA to handle the work folder.

4. The assigned ES PA sends an assignment(s) to the appropriate ICO, requesting that the office take a particular action, such as preparing a draft response letter. Note, some assignments may be simple — such as a direct reply response letter to be signed by the ICO — and some assignments may be much more complex, requiring in-depth collaboration between ICOs and NIH Exec Sec. See Section 2 for further details.

5. For correspondence to be signed by the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director, after the ICO has taken action, the ES PA reviews the draft and if necessary, provides edits. The draft is then ready for the ES Deputy Director and Director's review. The ES leadership team may have additional edits, questions, or recommendations at this stage.

6. The ES PA will then package the draft for review by the Principal Deputy Director and/or the Director. Upon review, the NIH Director or Principal Deputy Director may request changes be made to the draft. Otherwise, the letter will be approved and returned to NIH Exec Sec for signature, if not already signed.

7. When the approved or signed responses are returned to NIH Exec Sec for final processing, staff will update SAAVI with the final information and prepare the correspondence to be mailed or emailed.

8. Finally, the records team reviews the completed SAAVI files for archiving.

APPENDIX 10: Useful Links

Below is a list of useful links:

NIH Exec Sec Website: https://execsec.od.nih.gov/

GPO Style Manual: https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GPO-STYLEMANUAL-2008/

HHS Guide to Document Preparation: https://intranet.hhs.gov/about-hhs/exec-sec/document/2018-guide-document-preparation

Protocol Book: https://www.protocolredbook.com/index.php

Plain Language Resources:

- **Plain Language Writing Act of 2010:** https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-111publ274/pdf/PLAW-111publ274.pdf

- **Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN):** https://plainlanguage.gov/training/introductory-classes/

- **The Center for Plain Language:** https://centerforplainlanguage.org/