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Francis S. Collins, MD, PhD
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

August 14, 2015

Re: Request for Information: Inviting Comments and Suggestions on a Framework for the NIH-wide Strategic Plan

Dear Dr. Collins,

The Alzheimer's Association appreciates the opportunity to respond to the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Request for Information entitled "Inviting Comments and Suggestions on a Framework for the NIH-wide Strategic Plan," (NOT-OD-15-118). As the largest non-profit funder of Alzheimer's research, the Association is committed to accelerating the progress of new treatments, preventions and, ultimately, a cure for the disease, and we applaud NIH for its efforts to continue to improve the health of all Americans through the development of a strategic plan. The Alzheimer's Association supports the proposed framework and recommends the following in order to further maximize the investment of taxpayer resources as NIH pursues its mission.

Future opportunities or emerging research needs

As NIH develops and implements its strategic plan, the Alzheimer's Association encourages NIH to consider the following funding-related suggestions:

- *Prioritize biomedical research funding rather than proposing budget increases on a proportional basis across institutes and centers.* The current static budgeting mechanism does not proportionately address diseases that are affecting increasing numbers of people and that significantly complicate other health conditions. With strategic, targeted funding for these diseases, NIH can more effectively enhance Americans' health, lengthen lives, and reduce illness and disability.
- *Increase utilization of Program Announcements (PAs) and Requests for Applications (RFAs) for a more targeted approach to areas in which experts have identified specific unanswered questions that underpin new advances.* The use of PAs and RFAs can be targeted in their design and can help to accelerate advances in promising, high-impact fields. For example, the *National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease*,¹ which is updated regularly by the research community, includes scientific milestones to prevent and effectively treat Alzheimer's disease by 2025. Significantly faster progress toward these milestones could be achieved if NIH were to dedicate some degree of its Alzheimer's funding to PAs/RFAs, which can be more targeted in their design. This approach can be applied across disease areas and ICOs.
- *Confine funding decisions to research proposals that directly advance NIH's core mission.* NIH funds some research that more closely aligns with the missions of other agencies, such as health economics research. Federal agencies' adherence to their missions and careful coordination among agencies allows for more efficient use of taxpayer dollars and advancement of those missions.

¹ National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease, available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/daltcp/napa/#Plan>.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The Alzheimer's Association looks forward to our continued partnership with NIH. Please contact Laura Thornhill, Manager of Regulatory Affairs, at 202-638-7042 or lthornhill@alz.org if you have questions or if we can be of additional assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RE', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert Egge
Executive Vice President, Government Affairs