

**Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health**

**National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS)
2024–2029 Strategic Plan Roundtables**

May 9, 2023, and May 10, 2023

Executive Summary

On May 9 and 10, 2023, NCATS held two virtual roundtable meetings with members of the public. NCATS Director, Dr. Joni L. Rutter, provided an overview of NCATS' mission and vision, with a goal of gathering public input regarding opportunities, needs and other challenges for NCATS' consideration as the Center develops its Strategic Plan for years 2024-2029. The roundtable participants included members of the public such as patients and patient advocacy groups, rare diseases organizations, private industry and biotechnology companies, community advisory boards, NCATS-funded investigators and institutions. Also, employees of other federal agencies and the NIH were in attendance, including NCATS staff.

Meeting format and gathering of public input: The virtual format of the meeting allowed participants to enter responses directly through use of the virtual chat feature or through use of interactive presentation software here participants could submit responses anonymously via computer or smartphone and see them collectively appear in real time. As the meeting moved to small group breakout discussions, participants could additionally raise their hands and verbally participate in direct discussions with NCATS staff serving as moderators.

The meeting began with some icebreaker questions to understand the audience perspective and level of familiarity with NCATS and its current activities. The questions and comments included:

- When you think of NCATS, what words come to mind?
 - Translation, innovation, collaboration, research, equity, funding, training, slow, rare diseases, young, earnest, disease-agnostic, team science, opaque, forward-thinking, efficiency, industry, new therapeutics, transformational, inefficient, learning, infrastructure, bureaucratic, dysfunctional, revolutionary, state of the art, bench to bedside, boundary crossing, resources, ambitious, lab, animal-free, challenging, therapy, diversity, united, impact, connections, collaboration, infrastructure, community, catalyst, inclusive, bureaucratic, progressive, expert, rare disease, participants, evaluation, acceleration, learning, leader, breadth, bridge to patients, drug development, faster cure
- What do you think is the most important activity that NCATS does?
 - Funding, research, training, natural history, education, collaboration, infrastructure, science, translation, support, dissemination, technology, leadership, breakthroughs, trials, CTSAs, methods, matching research to communities, data, ethical research, valley of death, improving health, catalyze, community health, field standards, discovery, bringing groups together, rare diseases research, new technologies, change paradigms, risk taking, close the gap, machine learning, fail forward, teamwork, expanding thinking, reducing animal testing, drug development, advocacy, influence, help, accelerate science, supports rare diseases, alignment, catalyze transformation, drug screening, collaborative infrastructure.

Dr. Rutter discussed the Mission and Vision for NCATS: NCATS' mission is to turn research observations into health solutions through translational science with a vision to bring more treatments, for all people, more quickly. In fall of 2021 at the conclusion of NCATS 10th anniversary celebration¹, then Acting NCATS Director Dr. Rutter emphasized NCATS' vision of bringing more treatments to all people more quickly and introduced 'three audacious goals' to challenge the translational science community in all efforts to advance translation more efficiently and effectively:

- Increase the number of diseases with a treatment in development by fivefold.
- Dramatically increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and access across every area that NCATS supports.
- Enable diagnostics and therapeutics to reach people twice as quickly.

Now as NCATS Director, Dr. Rutter is leading NCATS by conducting roundtable meetings to ask NCATS stakeholders for their insights and perspectives on the opportunities and needs for translational science. This input will inform the design of the NCATS Strategic Plan.

Small Group Breakout Discussions: Following Dr. Rutter's presentation, each Roundtable meeting included smaller breakout discussion sessions moderated by members of NCATS leadership to enable more direct interaction and discussion with participants. Participants self-selected into one of four breakout discussions to address the questions below from the following perspectives: 1) Research, 2) Training & Education, 3) Community & Patient Engagement, and 4) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA).

In each discussion, NCATS sought input on the following questions:

- What is the biggest opportunity you see to make progress toward bringing more treatments for all people more quickly? How would you know it's succeeding?
- What are the unmet needs or gaps in translation (turning a research observation into a health solution) that should be addressed by NCATS?
- What is missing with the vision of more treatments for all people more quickly and cross-cutting themes/other topic areas (including key translational science topics)?
- What else should NCATS be considering during strategic planning?

Within these breakout discussions, participants highlighted gaps and opportunities for NCATS consideration for its strategic plan:

¹ [NCATS at 10: Improving Health for All Through Translational Science](#) and [Director's Message Series: NCATS' Bold Goals | National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences \(nih.gov\)](#)

Research	DEIA	Community & Patient Engagement	Training & Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Dissemination & Implementation •Prevention •Data sharing •Access to treatments •Research standards •Data standards •Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Data sharing •Platform approaches •Causes of disease •More infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Building trust •Understand translational science •Build bridges with new partners •Expand communication channels •Reach different communities •Bias from AI •Prevention, early detection, early interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Patients as partners •Engage communities earlier •Community in research design •Negative impacts of novel advances •Access and adoption •Increase real-world applicability •Meeting people where they are •Utilize existing data •Community research capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Team science training •Translational Science training •Workforce diversity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Data science/AI/Informatics •Clinical/clinical trials •Regulatory •Causes of disease •Non-animal models •Career transitions •Public-private partnerships •Earlier exposure to translational science

Several themes and topics were repeated across the different topic areas and included:

- Prevention and focus on causes of disease
- Better treatments, not just more treatments
- Dissemination and implementation
- Novel clinical trial approaches
- Health equity and access to care
- Exploring and expanding collaborations and partners
- Patients as part of research team
- Utilizing community engagement to reach underserved or marginalized populations
- Foster “bridges” to align translational research to regulatory decision-making
- Reduce administrative burden
- Build trust in science, research, and care
- Training a translational science workforce

Next steps: NCATS will post a Request For Information (RFI) in the summer of 2023 so that all stakeholders may provide written input to inform the strategic plan. Additionally, all stakeholders were encouraged to [visit the NCATS Strategic Plan website](#) and submit inquiries and comments regarding the strategic plan to NCATS2024StrategicPlan@mail.nih.gov.