



# Responses to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Common Fund Request for Information (RFI) on Challenges and Opportunities in Health and Science Communication

NOT-RM-22-012

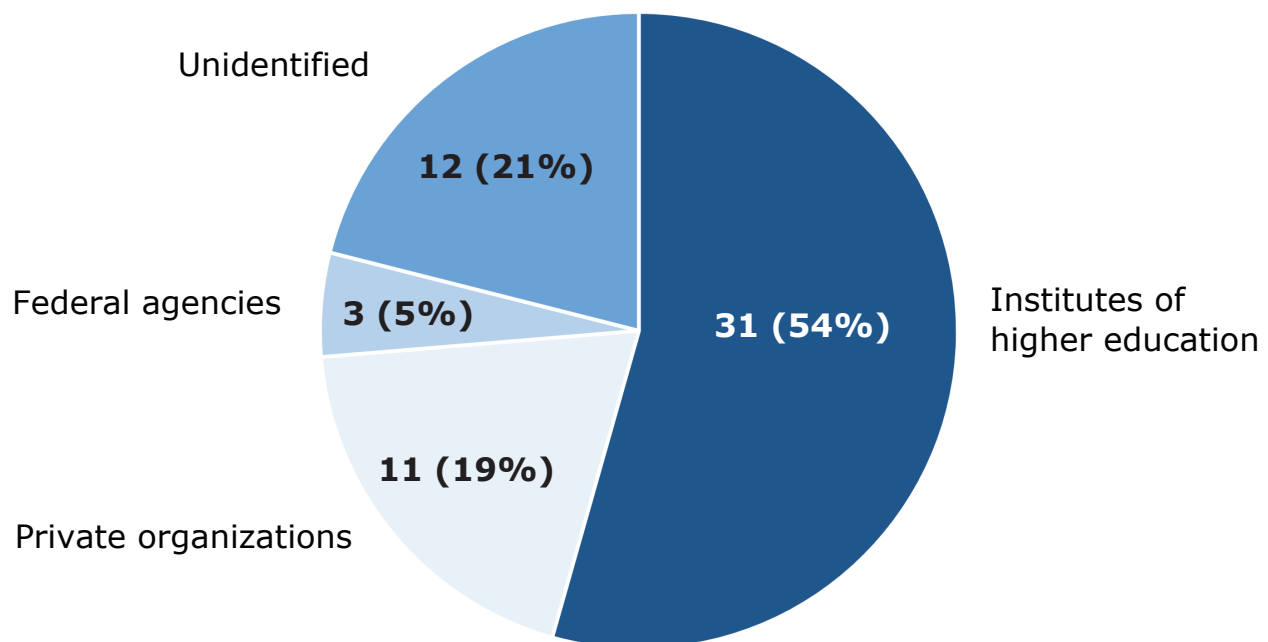
## Brief Summary of RFI

The NIH Common Fund issued an RFI to solicit input from the broad community regarding opportunities and challenges in health and science communication research. A total of 57 responses were yielded between April 26, 2022 and May 26, 2022 to the Challenges and Opportunities in Health and Science Communication RFI.

We present a high-level summary of responses to three main topics highlighted in the RFI:

- Communication research to enhance access to, equitable uptake of, and meaningful use of evidence-based health information
- Understanding and improving health and science literacy
- Understanding and reducing the spread and impact of health misinformation

### Respondent characteristics



**Note:** This document summarizes responses to the RFI and **does not indicate opinions, priorities, or funding opportunities of the NIH.**

# Summary of Respondent Input

## Q1: Communication research to enhance access to, equitable uptake of, and meaningful use of evidence-based health information

- Focus on community-based communication that centers around health equity and cultural needs
- Build a science of trust through understanding mistrust within communities, identifying credible information sources, and improving relationships between government entities and the broader public
- Create avenues for evidence-based and theoretically grounded health communication training of scientists, clinicians, and community leaders

### Respondent-identified research gaps

- Successful methods of health information uptake and informed decision-making
- Multi-phase health communication studies using interdisciplinary methods and approaches
- Psychological processes that impede information uptake
- Rapid methods of message testing and dissemination



**Respondent quote:** “Achieving health equity requires investments in evidence-based approaches to improving health communication - including patient-provider communication, interprofessional communication, and public health communication...”

## Q2: Understanding and improving health and science literacy

- Develop new methods of communication and narrative approaches with the public
- Improve health and science literacy and education of the public through fact-based media, public service announcements, and patient campaigns
- Partnerships with science journalists, social media/technology companies, health writers, and educators

### Respondent-identified research gaps

- Current levels of health and science literacy of the public especially among marginalized populations
- Health and science knowledge retention to reach school-aged children, families, and older adults
- Preventive interventions, such as “pre-bunking” in which individuals are trained to identify common false information messaging

**Respondent quote:** “Health and science literacy should be positioned as part of a broad communication science research agenda. Interdisciplinary research from communication, education (especially literacy for children and adults, K-12 education for science literacy), cognitive science (biases that affect information processing) and public health (community, health behavior, family systems, environmental health, chronic disease) is warranted...”

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### Q3: Understanding and reducing the spread and impact of health misinformation

- Improve collaborations between researchers, healthcare providers, and government entities in the dissemination of evidence-based and reliable health information
- Improve health misinformation and disinformation identification and mitigation
- Community-based participatory research approaches and understanding of neurocognitive mechanisms

#### Respondent-identified research gaps

- Information management and dissemination of best practices (big data analytics, social media listening tools) to inform health-related decision-making
- A public/private shared system that assesses real-time biomedical information and establishes medical consensus
- Large-scale automated health message tracking systems to identify misinformation messaging and mitigation strategies

**Respondent quote:** "...studies are needed that examine the characteristics of different information sources, message strategies, and channels that can improve understanding..."

#### Additional areas of respondent interest included:

- **Implementation science:** Identify and implement principles and methods needed to advance the effectiveness of community collaborations aimed at improving health and science literacy, particularly among populations that experience health disparities
- **Research literacy:** Improve the public's understanding of the ways in which research is conducted, how our understanding of a topic is subject to change, and methods of conveying this information
- **Behavior change/behavioral outcomes:** Identify factors that influence uptake of information and decision making that lead to behavioral outcomes in communities based on knowledge acquisition
- **Communication scientists:** Collaborate with scientists specializing in communication for developing public campaigns and improving methods of conveying information to the public. Train new communication scientists to navigate a changing communication landscape
- **Increase transparency and depoliticization:** Convey information to the public in a united way while explaining methods that led to decision-making
- **Communication access and the digital divide:** Explore ways in which inadequate internet access, a lack of digital devices, or limited digital literacy impact use of digital health technologies
- **Information networks:** Understand ways in which information spreads, including the flow, exposure, and speed, within communities to improve uptake and address misinformation



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