

**National Cancer Advisory Board (NCAB)
Subcommittee on Planning and Budget**

**8 February 2024
12:10 p.m.–1:10 p.m. EST**

Virtual Meeting

SUMMARY

Subcommittee Members

Dr. Anna D. Barker, Chair
Ms. Margaret Anne Anderson
Dr. Nilofer S. Azad
Dr. Richard J. Boxer
Dr. Luis Alberto Diaz, Jr. (absent)
Dr. Andrea Hayes Dixon

Ms. Ysabel Duron
Ms. Julie Papanek Grant
Dr. Nikan Khatibi
Dr. Ana Navas-Acien
Mr. Weston Ricks, Acting Executive Secretary
Dr. Ashani T. Weeraratna

Other Participants

Dr. John D. Carpten, Chair, NCAB
Dr. James H. Doroshow, National Cancer
Institute (NCI)
Dr. Paulette S. Gray, NCI
Dr. Michelle L. Heacock, NCAB
Dr. Amy B. Heimberger, NCAB
Ms. M.K. Holohan, NCI
Dr. Douglas R. Lowy, NCI
Ms. Anne Lubenow, NCI
Ms. Thu Nguyen, NCI

Dr. Diane Palmieri, NCI
Dr. W. Kimryn Rathmell, Director, NCI
Mr. Ricardo W. Rawle, NCI
Dr. Dinah S. Singer, NCI
Dr. Fred K. Tabung, NCAB
Dr. Karen M. Winkfield, NCAB
Ms. Joy Wiszneauckas, NCI
Dr. Amanda Cennamo, The Scientific
Consulting Group, Inc., Rapporteur

Welcome and Updates

Dr. Anna D. Barker, Chief Strategy Officer, Ellison Institute for Transformative Medicine, University of Southern California

Dr. Anna D. Barker, Subcommittee Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. EST. In her opening remarks, Dr. Barker reviewed the [charge of the Subcommittee](#) and underscored the importance of the Subcommittee's role in assisting Dr. W. Kimryn Rathmell, the new NCI Director, in her efforts to evaluate NCI programs and maximize the utilization of its resources. She emphasized that understanding the highly complex NCI budget process will be crucial over the next several years.

Overview of the NCI Budget Process

Mr. Weston Ricks, Director, Office of Budget and Finance, NCI

Mr. Weston Ricks, Subcommittee Acting Executive Secretary, provided an overview of the NCI budget process, which he noted is rigorous and extensive. First, the White House Office of Management and Budget coordinates with federal agencies to formulate the President's budget, which covers all federal agencies—including the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and NCI—and reflects the President's priorities. The President submits the budget to Congress, which must pass appropriations legislation that funds federal agencies. The congressional appropriations committees consider the President's budget as they prepare appropriations legislation for the next fiscal year.

After the appropriations committees finalize their legislative proposals, the House and Senate consider the proposed legislation. Once the differences between the two bills are reconciled and a unified bill passes, Congress sends the legislation to the President. Finally, the President signs the appropriations bill into law, making funds available to executive agencies, including the NCI and NIH. He also noted that the NCI represents a small portion of the overall budget effort. Mr. Ricks explained that the National Cancer Act of 1971 gives the NCI Director special authority to submit an annual professional judgment budget directly to the President for review and delivery to Congress. This budget reflects NCI cancer research priorities and identifies areas of potential investment in cancer research.

Congress has enacted one or more continuing resolutions (CRs) in all but three of the past 46 fiscal years. Mr. Ricks explained that CRs create uncertainty for affected agencies. Each year, Congress must approve spending bills to fund the government for the next 12 months. If spending bills are not passed by October 1 (i.e., the beginning of the fiscal year), the government will face a shutdown. CRs provide temporary funding for a specific period of time when regular appropriations acts are not passed by October 1. Mr. Ricks added that CRs cannot be used for “new starts” and that they establish a funding rate rather than provide a set amount. CRs may include stipulations that adjust the duration, amount, or purpose for which funds can be used.

The professional judgment budget for fiscal year (FY) 2025 has been released and is publicly available. The professional judgment budget reflects NCI’s aspirations to move cancer research forward; the President’s budget often is far smaller than the professional judgment budget. In FY 2025, the NCI is prepared to support a \$11.466 billion (B) investment in cancer research across the United States and the world. The professional judgment budget for FY 2025 captures NCI’s needs for such an investment in the areas of cancer biology, cancer prevention, cancer detection and diagnosis, cancer treatment, public health and cancer control, and training and infrastructure. Mr. Ricks also noted that NCI’s purchasing power has decreased by \$1.1 B over the past 20 years.

Mr. Ricks briefly discussed the implications of a “flat” budget for FY 2024. Because the Cancer MoonshotSM funds were never part of the NCI base budget, the House’s budget markup for FY 2024 did not consider the fact that the \$216 million (M) in Cancer Moonshot funding for FY 2023 goes to zero in FY 2024. The Senate considered this issue for FY 2024 and added the \$216 M, plus \$60 M, to its markup. Mr. Ricks also explained that it will be necessary to add about \$250 M to the research project grant pool in FY 2024 to maintain the current 12th percentile payline for new awards and to fund noncompeting awards at 100 percent. Furthermore, the NCI incurs \$75 M to \$100 M annually in increased mandatory expenses (e.g., program evaluation, cybersecurity, Center for Scientific Review).

NCI appropriations for FY 2024 and FY 2025 both currently are in development. The NCI is operating under a CR that ends on 8 March 2024, and the NCI cannot make funding decisions until the budget is approved. Mr. Ricks underscored the importance of providing information to the extramural community as early as possible. The FY 2025 President’s budget will be released in March 2024, and appropriations hearings are anticipated for April or May 2024.

Mr. Ricks briefly described the congressional justification, which justifies the President’s budget request to Congress each year by explaining NCI’s mission; describing current and future areas of investment, organized by five broad scientific goals; and providing comparative data and analysis for the previous, current, and proposed budgets (i.e., FY 2023, FY 2024, and FY 2025, respectively).

Discussion

Dr. Barker commented on the importance of engaging scientists in budget-related discussions. In response to a question from Dr. Barker, Mr. Ricks explained that NCI’s budget has been almost fully discretionary and that Congress possesses the authority to negotiate reallocation of funding among agencies. The

Cancer Moonshot might be supported by mandatory funds in the future, and additional management consideration would be required. Dr. Barker remarked that the negotiations are highly rigorous and competitive and that strong data are needed for justifications. Ms. M.K. Holohan stated that most of the overall federal budget is composed of mandatory spending and is dictated by statute. She added that the professional judgment budget serves as a valuable tool for conveying NCI's priorities and needs.

In response to a question from Dr. Barker, Mr. Ricks explained that the NCI has partnered with other agencies to provide funding through delegations of authority. The NCI also has leveraged other groups' infrastructure to accomplish specific goals. Transfers of larger sums often are dictated by congressional actions (e.g., COVID-19 research, U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief).

Dr. Barker inquired about the importance of carefully reading appropriations report language. Ms. Holohan confirmed that the NCI reviews this language closely to understand the priorities of the appropriations subcommittees. She remarked that this language has evolved over time and has become more transparent. Report language can be used to commend agencies, provide suggestions, or request reports. She added that the nature of requests can vary from year to year.

Subcommittee Discussion: Areas and Questions to Explore in 2024

Subcommittee Members

Dr. Andrea Hayes Dixon asked about opportunities for the Subcommittee to actively contribute to NCI's budget process. Mr. Ricks responded that the Subcommittee is invited to provide comments on NCI's professional judgment budget. Dr. Barker remarked that further opportunities for engagement could be explored. She also noted that the professional judgment budget has been streamlined over the years. Dr. John D. Carpten added that the Subcommittee could provide guidance throughout the FY 2026 budget process.

Dr. Barker suggested that the Subcommittee could explore approaches for increasing attention to the professional judgment budget among the White House and Congress. Ms. Holohan stated that the professional judgment budget provides an opportunity for the NCI to carefully consider progress that could be made in the next 10 years with increased investment. She noted that the professional judgment budget represents an aspirational effort and underscored the importance of clear communication. Mr. Ricks added that the professional judgment budget can spark important conversations about the next steps of funding for cancer research.

Ms. Ysabel Duron asked how the Subcommittee could help increase research focused on historically underrepresented populations. Mr. Ricks commented on the importance of this challenge, which largely reflects NCI's decreased purchasing power. He suggested that the Subcommittee consider approaches to help promote the prioritization of important topics, such as inclusion of underrepresented populations, in cancer research. Dr. Barker agreed that prioritization is a crucial consideration for the NCI budget.

Dr. Rathmell added that she is interested in engaging with the Subcommittee to further explore strategies related to the NCI budget; she emphasized the importance of this topic across the NCI. Dr. Barker commented that the extramural community is keenly aware of issues related to the NCI budget. She suggested that the NCI provide data to the community to help them anticipate budget dynamics in future years. Dr. Barker also remarked that the NCI budget will remain a challenging topic in the years to come and reiterated that the Subcommittee members will play an important role during this time.

Adjournment

Dr. Barker thanked the attendees and invited them to send follow-up comments to her or Dr. Rathmell. She adjourned the Subcommittee meeting at 1:11 p.m. EST.

Dr. Anna D. Barker
Chair

Date

Mr. Weston Ricks
Acting Executive Secretary

Date