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### Seeking More 'Strategic' Funding, NIH to Study Animal, Non-Animal, Other 'Alternative' Models

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By Theresa Defino

A new NIH working group will spend the next year analyzing “novel alternative” and complementary research models to offer an “honest assessment of the scientific opportunity, both in terms of where these technologies hold promise and where they are limited in approach,” in the words of Lyric Jorgenson, acting director for the NIH Office of Science Policy.<sup>[1]</sup>

Among the goals of the working group—which reports to the Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD)—is to help NIH “focus on strategically investing research into methods and models that are best able to answer the research question at hand,” according to Jorgenson, co-chair of the new Catalyzing the Development and Use of Alternative Methods to Advance Biomedical Research Working Group.

Without offering specifics, Jorgenson said NIH needs to “acknowledge that...the potential of some of these methods have been oversold, and the value may be limited in terms of the scope and insight they can provide into the actual complexity of human biology, behavior and disease.”

Jorgenson presented plans for the working group at a special, one-hour meeting in November, adding that more information would be forthcoming at the ACD’s regular get-together early this month. The ACD is NIH’s highest-ranking external advisory body and generally meets twice yearly—in June and December.

The novel alternatives working group is co-chaired by Howard Chang, professor of cancer research and professor of dermatology and genetics at Stanford University.

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