



Progress Report

April 2025 - September 2026

National Institutes of Health



Agency Pledge

April 2025 - NIH pledged to prioritize *“human-relevant”* models and reduce animal testing across all intramural and extramural research.

7/7/2025

NOFO announcement

NIH announced it will no longer issue funding opportunities exclusively for animal models. Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) related to animal model systems are required to also support human-focused methods.

7/7/2025

FDA-NIH workshop

NIH co-hosted a workshop with the FDA focused on reducing animal testing. Agency leadership committed to transparency, urging public reporting of spending on animal models and reinforcing policies that prioritize animal-free methods.

7/24/2025

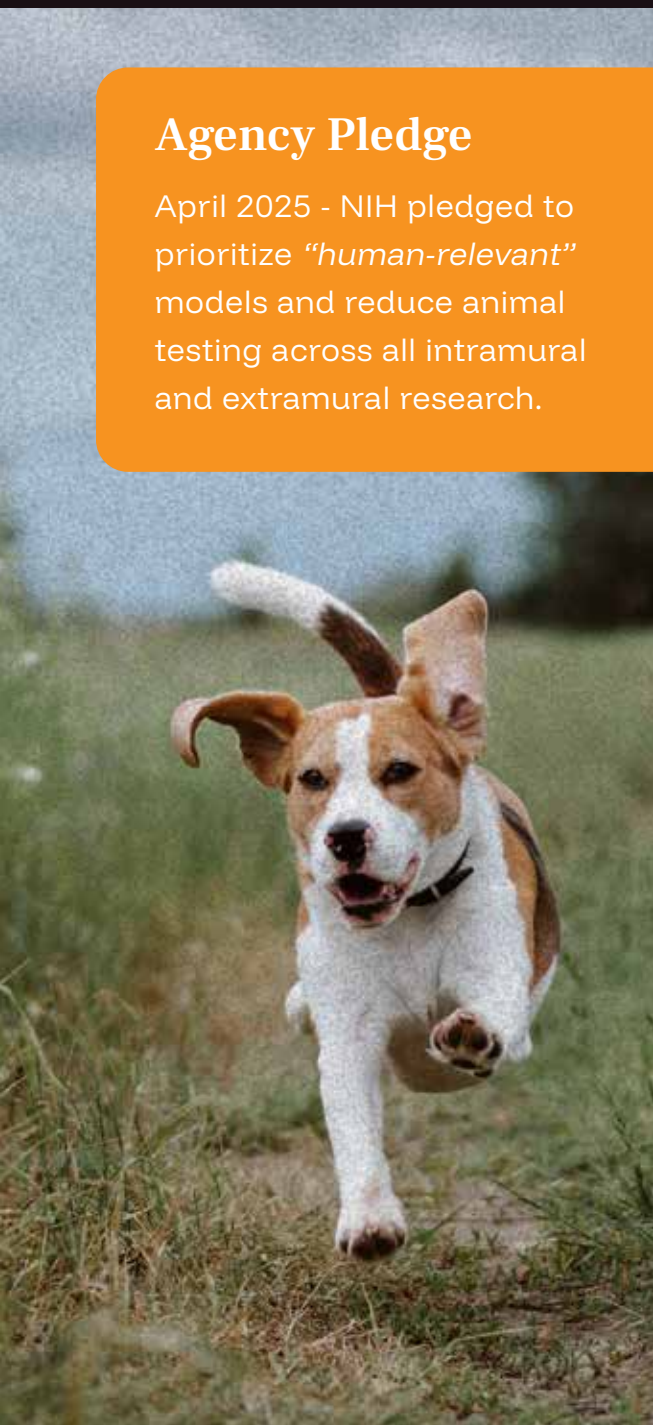
Validation and Qualification Network (VQN)

The Foundation for NIH (FNIH) announced the creation of the VQN, a public-private partnership to advance and standardize non-animal methods. The partnership consists of over 40 government agencies and life science, nonprofit, and regulatory organizations.

Summer 2025

Tackling animal-methods bias

The agency began training grant reviewers to evaluate human-based approaches without defaulting to animal data. This will help overcome an animal-methods bias that has long plagued the advancement of non-animal models.



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Summer 2025

CAMERA Database

The Collection of Alternative Methods for Regulatory Application (CAMERA) Database was created to provide a center hub of validated alternative methods for safety and efficacy testing.

Summer 2025

FAQs updated

The NIH released FAQs to help applicants navigate the new funding policy and justify the use of animal or non-animal approaches based on scientific merit.

9/9/2025

MAHA report highlights NAMs

The Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) strategy report, *Make our Children Healthy Again*, emphasizes use of New Approach Methods (NAMs), stating, "This improves prevention, diagnosis, and personalized treatment strategies while reducing reliance on animal studies that often fail to replicate complex human conditions."

9/25/2025

Launch of SOM Center

\$87 million was allocated to create the Standardized Organoid Modeling (SOM) Center, the nation's first dedicated organoid development center to reduce animal research.

9/25/2025

Some animal-testing grants canceled

CBSNews reports that "The Trump administration has canceled nearly \$28 million of federal grants for animal testing as major federal health agencies are phasing out research on live animals in favor of new alternatives"



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9/30/2025

Reduction to Practice prize

The NIH Common Fund and NASA's Tournament Lab launched the Reduction to Practice prize, a competition seeking teams to demonstrate practical, integrated human-based NAMs within three years.

January 2026

ORIP strategic plan

The Office of Research Infrastructure Programs (ORIP) released their strategic plan for 2026-2030. Priority #1 of the plan focuses on continued investment in animal models of human disease and the "need to ensure national availability of nonhuman primate (NHP) resources."

12/20/2025

HHS Secretary targets monkey use

The Secretary of Health and Human Services indicated federal interest in ending research monkey imports, investing in monkey sanctuaries, and ending the use of monkeys in testing.

February 2026

Launch of VQN pilot projects

The VQN announced its pilot projects focusing on improving preterm birth risk prediction using human-relevant biomarkers, modeling developmental neurotoxicity with lab-grown human brain systems, studying inhalation toxicity using lung models that closely replicate human tissue, and using computational tools to predict acute oral toxicity and better understand how chemicals affect the body.

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3/18/2026

Complement-ARIE awards

NIH announced more than \$150 million to develop and scale research methods that better simulate human biology and reduce reliance on animal models. The funding marks the first awards under the Complement Animal Research in Experimentation (Complement-ARIE) program, an initiative to develop, implement, and standardize non-animal methods.

Mid June 2026

NIH-ORIP workshop

The NIH Office of Research Infrastructure Programs (ORIP) hosted the workshop “Advancing Research Infrastructure to Study Human Diseases” to examine how biomedical research can integrate traditional animal models with NAMs, including in vitro, in silico, and other human-relevant methods. While the workshop discussed expanding non-animal approaches, it primarily emphasized continued investment in animal models.

5/4/2026

Guidance on selecting NAMs

NIH published new guidance encouraging researchers to select the most scientifically appropriate research model based on human relevance and translational value rather than historical use. The guidance emphasizes that animal models should not be used by default and encourages researchers to justify their model selection using the best scientific evidence.

7/28/2026

Human-based cancer research

The agency directed \$15 million to establish a Technology Development Center to develop clinical-grade NAMs to inform treatment decisions for colorectal cancer patients.



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8/4/2026

NCI strengthens justification requirements for animal models

Beginning with National Cancer Institute's grant applications due October 5, 2026, researchers proposing animal experiments must explain why animal models are necessary and why human-based approaches cannot adequately address the research question. The guidance represents an important shift from "justify the alternative" to "justify the animal."

9/21/2026

Recruiting human-based science experts

In an attempt to address animal-use bias, the agency launched an initiative to recruit grant reviewers with expertise in human-based science.

9/14/2026

Computer modeling to advance hormone research

NIH announced a \$21 million initiative to develop computer models using human data to study how hormones affect treatment safety and effectiveness in men and women. NIH acknowledged that animal models do not adequately capture these differences. The initiative will support human-based tools to help predict patients' responses to medicines and guide more personalized care.

9/21/2026

\$88 million for human-based research infrastructure

NIH announced a first-of-its-kind \$88 million investment for infrastructure projects to support human-based science.

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9/21/2026

New human-based research lab

NIH announced plans for a new laboratory that will combine small, lab-grown models of human organs with robotics and artificial intelligence. Results from each experiment will help guide the next, with the goal of speeding research, producing more reliable findings, and reducing reliance on animal experiments.

10/6/2026

NHLBI strengthens justification requirements for animal models

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute announced that, beginning with applications submitted in January 2027, researchers must justify their use of animal models and explain why NAMs are inadequate directly in grant abstracts. For funded projects, these abstracts are publicly accessible, increasing transparency around animal use.



Where NIH Progress Falls Short

- NIH has announced significant human-based research initiatives but has not established a comprehensive timetable with measurable targets for replacing animal experiments across its research portfolio.
- ORIP's 2026–2030 strategic plan includes continued investment in animal models, and NIH's FY2026 operating plan includes \$30 million for Primate Research Centers. These parallel investments raise concerns about whether the transition will reduce animal research or simply expand human-based research alongside it.
- Investments in organoids, computer models, and other human-based tools are encouraging, but do not establish how much funding is being redirected from animal studies. NIH's promised annual spending reports will be essential to assessing that change.
- Ending funding announcements devoted exclusively to animal models does not end funding for animal experiments. NIH explicitly allows applicants to propose studies using only animals, leaving substantial room for existing practices to continue.
- NIH continues to describe human-based methods as tools that can be used alongside animal models. Stronger expectations are needed to ensure suitable non-animal approaches replace experiments rather than become additional layers of research.

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How NAVS is Helping the NIH Fulfill its Pledge

- **Shaping NIH's priorities:** NAVS submitted comments on NIH's FY2027–2031 Strategic Plan, calling for increased investment in human-based methods, greater accountability, and funding decisions guided by human relevance and predictive value. NAVS also supported proposed offices dedicated to validation, reproducibility, and regulatory translation of non-animal methods.
- **Advancing the validation of non-animal tools:** NAVS' Director of Science, Lauren Stein, serves on the FNIH Validation and Qualification Network Steering Committee, helping guide the selection of pilot projects with strong potential to replace animal use.
- **Supporting a path from laboratories to sanctuary:** NAVS mobilized supporters and submitted a letter signed by Science Advisory Committee members urging OHSU's board to support discussions with NIH about transitioning the Oregon National Primate Research Center to a sanctuary.
- **Challenging continued investment in animal research:** NAVS urges NIH and Congress to redirect investments in primate research infrastructure toward human-relevant technologies and the transition away from animal experimentation.
- **Seeking enforceable transparency:** NAVS supports the Federal Animal Research Accountability Act (H.R. 3295), which would require annual reporting of animal numbers and pain categories in a publicly searchable database, helping measure progress toward reducing animal use.
- **Working to end NIH-funded animal experiments overseas:** NAVS supports the Cease Animal Research Grants Overseas (CARGO) Act, which would prohibit NIH support for animal research conducted outside the United States.
- **Building the next generation of humane scientists:** Through support for the International Foundation for Ethical Research (IFER), NAVS helps early-career scientists develop non-animal methods. NAVS also recognized five young scientists at the International Science and Engineering Fair for work advancing animal-free research.

→ <https://navs.org/crossroads-2029>