

Evaluation of NIMH Laboratory/Branch Chiefs

Derived from the NIH Guidance on Roles of Lab and Branch Chiefs (or Equivalent):

<https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/personnel/policies-recruitment-processes/roles-lab-branch-chiefs-or-equivalent>

Background

The Laboratory or Branch (L/B) is a civil and respectful community of Principal Investigators (PIs) whose work synergizes to achieve more than the individual PIs. An L/B Chief is a senior investigator who leads the Laboratory or Branch and, as such is a central figure in the fulfillment of the IC mission worthy of both support and careful evaluation. To clarify expectations for these important positions—distinct from the roles played by these scientists as PIs—we set out the following general principles.

Expectations for L/B Chiefs

Overall, the L/B Chiefs should create an environment that fosters scientific excellence and innovation, encourages collegiality and cooperation, extends leadership opportunities, promotes an inclusive environment, and provides scientific/clinical input for the Scientific Director (SD) and other Institute leadership.

Scientific Leadership

- Provides scientific vision and leadership to the lab/branch, supporting innovative, independent science by members of the L/B.
- Creates an interactive and productive scientific environment conducive to creative, collaborative, and high-quality research (e.g., holds regular lab/branch meetings, etc.)
- Serves as an advisor to the Scientific Director and Clinical Director on policy and scientific issues
- Participates in recruiting exciting new science into the L/B, demonstrating a commitment to seek a diverse pool of applicants for open L/B positions.
- Fosters collaborations both within and outside the L/B that advance science and create productive teams both within the L/B and across the NIH.
- For Clinical Programs: The L/B Chief should oversee and evaluate new clinical research protocols, facilitate scientific and IRB review, and assure the diversity of clinical cohorts used in human subjects' research and compliance with human subject regulations.

Mentorship

- Encourages all staff to participate in training opportunities and identifies opportunities for L/B members to contribute to the NIMH mission.
- Serves as a mentor to all PIs in their lab/branch
 - Provides guidance during the preparation of BSC materials
 - Attends BSC presentations and Q&A sessions
 - Monitors Investigators' mentoring efforts for trainees
- Serves as a mentor for tenure-track investigators
 - Assists them in establishment and managing their lab
 - Assists during tenure process, including:
 - participating in mentoring committees
 - writing nominating memo to the Scientific Director to initiate the tenure process
 - guiding tenure track investigators during selection of referees who write letters of support for their promotion to tenure
 - attending the Central Tenure Committee meeting on behalf of their tenure track investigators going up for tenure

Ethical Leadership

- Exhibits ethical and professional behavior of the highest standards, demonstrates integrity and has strong interpersonal skills.
- Makes every possible effort to create and sustain an inclusive research environment in the L/B and to recruit a diverse pool of candidates for open L/B positions, including women and members of groups under-represented in biomedical research. The L/B Chief should be proactive in all aspects of recruitment activities, such as supporting implicit bias awareness training, and trans-NIH programs including the Distinguished Scholars Program.
- Fosters a climate of the highest research integrity
- Addresses interpersonal issues including harassment (both bullying and sexual harassment and other inappropriate behavior) and inappropriate relationships quickly, appropriately, and effectively, including required reporting or intervention at the level of Civil and/or OITE to resolve disputes.
- Facilitates and manages a workplace environment that is respectful of all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, race, ethnicity, or national origin.

Administrative Management

- Manages any centralized L/B resources (including personnel, contracts, equipment, and space) in an equitable, merit-based, and transparent manner to encourage scientific advances and innovation without bias or favoritism.
- Meets or communicates regularly with the Scientific Director, the L/B Administrative

Officer (AO) and administrative team, and communicates relevant information to members of the L/B.

- Supports a culture of laboratory safety, IT security and appropriate tech transfer practices, ensuring information is communicated and prescribed practices are followed.
- Participates in succession planning as appropriate to promote outstanding science.

Review of L/B Chiefs

The evaluation of the effectiveness of leadership is important for the vitality of any institution. At NIMH, L/B chiefs will be evaluated by the NIMH Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC) with regards to their adherence to the above principles, in conjunction with their regular BSC review at least every four years. This applies to L/Bs including more than one Principal Investigator. The L/B Chief review results will be shared with the DDIR and the NIH Equity Committee (NEC) as part of the NEC's regular review of the NIMH intramural program. The L/B Chief evaluation process should be one in which all Principal Investigators (PIs), trainees and other members of the L/B can speak or report freely about their concerns, including the option for providing anonymous feedback.

Changes to L/B Chief Positions

While it is expected that SD decisions regarding continuation of the L/B Chief's administrative roles or changes to L/B structures will be informed by the reviews described in this document, changes consistent with the mission of the NIH or the IC can take place separate from the review process described in this document. Recruitment for L/B Chiefs will be public and open, with a transparent process that is communicated before the search is initiated. All L/B Chief searches will be under the oversight of the Deputy Director for Intramural Research (DDIR). For searches restricted to the IC or NIH due to limited resources, special permission must be obtained from the DDIR.

APPENDIX

Information that should inform the Review Committee

- IC expectations of L/B Chiefs based on the expectations listed above.
- Information on how L/B Chiefs were appointed and their appointment length.
- Information regarding what L/B resources L/B Chiefs control and how those resources were allocated.
- From each L/B Chief, an up to 5-page narrative addressing how each of the elements defined by the IC (scientific leadership, mentorship, ethical leadership, and administrative management) are being addressed.
- 10-minute L/B overview presentation at the BSC review meeting.
- Summary reports for each PI in the L/B and any other L/B functions that are being reviewed. This should include any existing Site Visit reviews of leadership or Blue Ribbon Panel reports in ICs where these have occurred in the last 5 years.
- The SD, EO, and head AO will be available at the meeting to specify any persistent areas related to leadership that need improvement.
- Feedback solicited from trainees and other scientific staff (including all PIs) in the L/B about the performance of the L/B Chief as an anonymous survey. L/B members may also send anonymous comments to the BSC chair via the BSC Executive Secretary (Jennifer.Mehren@nih.gov). A summary of the anonymous feedback will be shared with the L/B Chief.
- Information on the career trajectory of previous L/B trainees compiled from the 5 year training and mentoring forms of all PIs in the L/B.