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# National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine

## *Opportunities for Public-Private Partnerships*

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) developed this document as guidance for private entities interested in partnering to support our activities.<sup>1</sup> NCCAM is committed to leveraging our intellectual and financial resources through partnerships with for-profit and non-profit organizations, when appropriate. The Center's mission and priorities—as well as National Institutes of Health (NIH) policy—guide our evaluation and selection of promising collaborative opportunities.

## Pursuing Our Mission and Priorities

NCCAM is dedicated to *exploring* complementary and alternative healing practices in the context of rigorous science, *training* complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) researchers, and *disseminating* authoritative CAM information to the public and professional communities. Together, these strategic areas constitute our mission.

This mission drives our organizational priorities, detailed in *Expanding Horizons of Health Care: Strategic Plan 2005-2009*,<sup>2</sup> NCCAM's 5-year strategic plan. While crafting our new plan, we identified a fourth strategic area to guide our next 5 years: advancing our organization. Collaborative relationships are a key priority within this strategic area.

## Following NIH Policy

Although NCCAM decides which collaborative activities best support our priorities and advance our mission, our decisions must comply with NIH policy, including those related to conflict of interest.<sup>3</sup> To ensure compliance, we rely on input and advice from key offices within the NIH Office of the Director, such as the Office of General Counsel (OGC); the Program on Public Private Partnerships (PPPP) within the Office of Science Policy; the Office of Extramural Research; and the Office of Intramural Research,

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<sup>1</sup> NCCAM also collaborates with public organizations, particularly other NIH institutes and centers; Phase III clinical trials are a common collaborative effort. Such partnerships mesh with NIH policy and reflect the perceived benefit of sharing resources and expertise across NIH.

<sup>2</sup> Visit <http://nccam.nih.gov/about/plans/2005/index.htm> to view our strategic plan.

<sup>3</sup> NIH Policy Manual – in preparation 2005; NIH Policy Manual 1135, 12/19/01, partially revised 3/3/04 & 5/24/05.

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including its Office of Technology Transfer. In addition, we turn to OGC and PPPP for specific guidance in developing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), which govern our partnering relationships. An MOU defines the purpose of the partnership, each party's activities and responsibilities, and relevant statutory authorities.

## Evaluating Potential Partnerships

NCCAM accepts inquiries from private organizations interested in collaboratively supporting our extramural and intramural research and research training activities<sup>4</sup> and our outreach and education activities. We evaluate each inquiry on its own merit to determine its fit with organizational priorities that direct our activities.<sup>5</sup> The following questions guide our evaluation:

- Are the goals of the proposed partnership explicit and consistent with our mission?
- Are the proposed activities of sufficiently high priority that they might have been implemented with appropriated funds, had such funds been available?
- Does the partnership conflict with our practices and procedures?
- Do the potential partner's other business practices or organizational activities represent or suggest a direct or indirect conflict with NIH mission and policies?
- Are oversight mechanisms in place to gauge progress and identify potential or emerging conflicts during the partnership?

Ultimately, our decision to partner with a private organization must be science-based, priority-driven, and in the public interest. Most important, it must comply with NIH policy.

## Establishing Partnerships

NCCAM's partnerships with private entities can take a variety of forms involving the exchange or leveraging of ideas, knowledge, and resources. Collaborative projects use the full array of administrative mechanisms available to NIH, including grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, cooperative research and development awards (CRADAs), and gift authority. Gifts may be made directly to NCCAM or through the Foundation for NIH (<http://www.fnih.org>), founded to support the mission of NIH by identifying and developing opportunities for innovative public-private partnerships.

Partnerships could cover a range of activities, from supporting a one-time event to launching and managing a complex, long-term activity. Possible collaborative activities

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<sup>4</sup> NCCAM funds extramural activities at external sites, such as universities and research institutes; intramural activities are conducted in NCCAM labs at NIH.

<sup>5</sup> The strategic plan (<http://nccam.nih.gov/about/plans/2005/index.htm>) guides our continuing assessment and setting of priorities in response to new scientific opportunities or public health needs. Current research priorities are detailed at <http://nccam.nih.gov/research/priorities/index.htm>.

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could include, for example, support for research projects; research training activities; patient recruitment for clinical trials; development of information products and dissemination; educational campaigns and outreach; and meetings, conferences, and symposia.

## Contacting NCCAM

For further information on collaborative opportunities with NCCAM, contact Linda Engel, Special Assistant to the Director for Program Development at [engell@od.nih.gov](mailto:engell@od.nih.gov).