
Request for Information (RFI) on Public and Private Sector Uses of Biometric Technologies: Responses

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January 11, 2022

Dr. Eric Lander  
Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20504  

Re: Response to RFI on “Public and Private Sector Uses of Biometric Technologies,” FR Doc. 2021-21975

Dear Dr. Lander,

The Networking and Information Technology Research and Development (NITRD)’s, Health Information Technology Research and Development (HITRD) Interagency Working Group (IWG) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Request for Information (RFI) from the OSTP on public and private sector uses of biometric technologies.

The HITRD IWG is a federal interagency working group that reports to the NSTC’s NITRD Subcommittee. The HITRD IWG was formed in 2010 to advance information technology (IT) research and development (R&D) for medical, functional, and public health outcomes across 15 participating federal agencies¹. The HITRD IWG advances R&D by coordinating agency plans and activities, promoting collaborations, and providing a forum for exchanging information and articulating R&D needs to policymakers and decision-makers.

*Reference the Federal Health Information Technology Research & Development Strategic Framework² for areas/agencies where this work is being done.

With a focus on the connection of biometrics and health, we offer the following observations.

*Opportunities for new biometrics technology  
- 5G  
- Artificial Intelligence  
- Pervasive computing

*Challenges for using biometrics to understand health  
- Privacy/security is an ongoing concern  
- Ethical and trustworthy technology and data is still not a standard  
- Ability to share data for research and monitoring is limited  
  - Exculpatory language in commercial Terms of Service  
  - Data ownership  
  - Data sharing plans  
- Lack of infrastructure to leverage technology and data across agencies  
- Lack of transparency in existing technologies and need for best practices

¹ https://www.nitrd.gov/coordination-areas/hitrd/  
- Need for interoperability of technologies and data, including a need for ontologies and standards

*Suggested actions that the HITRD IWG could coordinate, if called upon
- Data call / portfolio analysis of health-focused biometric work across agencies
- Support infrastructure development to facilitate data sharing of health biometric data and coordination across agencies
- Listening sessions and engagement with industry and the research community to facilitate R&D, as well as data sharing related to health biometric technologies

Once again, we appreciate your efforts to understand the biometric technology landscape. The HITRD IWG would be pleased to serve as a partner and resource for the OSTP as it continues work to understand the use biometric technologies.

This submission represents the individual views of the members of the Health IT IWG, not necessarily those of their home agency or the NITRD Program.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Wendy Nilsen at [redacted] or Dana Wolff-Hughes at [redacted], co-chairs of the HITRD IWG.

Sincerely,

Wendy Nilsen, NSF

Dana Wolff-Hughes, NIH