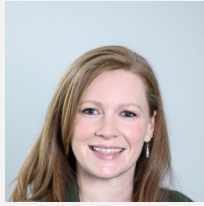


NIH Program Director Bios



Kari Ashmont, Ph.D.

Translational Team Lead

National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering
(NIBIB)

Kari Ashmont, Ph.D. is the Translational Team Lead at the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB). She joined NIBIB in 2022 and manages the [NIBIB Small Business Programs](#), including the [Concept to Clinic: Commercializing Innovation \(C3i\) Program](#), and co-leads NIBIB's RADx® Tech efforts. Additionally, Dr. Ashmont co-leads the [Dissemination Programs](#) for the [NIH BRAIN Initiative](#). Previously, Dr. Ashmont was a Program Director at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) where she oversaw translational device cooperative agreements and ran the NIH Blueprint for Neuroscience Research Education Program on Translational Devices (R25). Prior to joining the NINDS in 2017, Dr. Ashmont was a postdoctoral researcher at Phoenix Children's Hospital, where her work focused on using engineering approaches and technology to improve clinical care and diagnostics, particularly in pediatric epilepsy and traumatic brain injury. As a graduate student, Dr. Ashmont developed a novel seizure detection algorithm and worked on projects involving micro-stimulation capabilities for cortical visual prosthetics and sensory discriminability. She received Bachelor of Science degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Biology from Clarkson University and both a Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degree in Biomedical Engineering from Arizona State University.



Taryn Aubrecht, Ph.D.

Program Director

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

Dr. Taryn Aubrecht joined the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke Division of Translation Research (DTR) in 2021 and served as a health program specialist in the Small Business Programs. In 2023 she was promoted to program director of clinical and research tools in the Small Business Program. Prior to joining NINDS, she worked in grants management at the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs and Cohen Veterans Bioscience. She obtained her BA in neuroscience from the College of Wooster and a PhD in neuroscience from The Ohio State University, studying affective behaviors, learning and memory, and neuronal morphology in response to a model for obstructive sleep apnea combined with other factors such as light at night, stroke, and gonadal hormones. She then worked as a postdoctoral fellow at the Shock, Trauma and Anesthesiology Research Center at the University of Maryland, where she explored the involvement of cell cycle in apoptosis following traumatic brain injury.



Eddie Billingslea, Ph.D.

Small Business Strategy Coordinator

National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS)

Eddie Billingslea, Ph.D., is the small business strategy coordinator at the Office of the Director. He is responsible for coordinating the NIGMS small business program, as well as identifying and developing new opportunities for NIGMS commercialization and entrepreneurial activities, especially those related to capacity building, training, mentoring and diversity. Prior to joining NIGMS, Billingslea was the strategic planning and evaluation lead in the Office of Research on Women's Health. Prior to that, he was a health science policy analyst in the Center for Research Strategy at the National Cancer Institute. Billingslea earned a B.A. in psychology from Virginia Union University and a Ph.D. in neuroscience from Georgetown University. He performed postdoctoral research at the University of Pennsylvania.



Stephanie Davis, Ph.D.

Small Business Program Coordinator

National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI)

Stephanie Davis has served as the Small Business Program Coordinator in the Innovation and Commercialization Office since December 2020. Before joining the Innovation Office, Stephanie was selected for the 2019-2020 Executive Branch AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellows Program, where she served as a Program Manager in the National Institute on Aging Office of Small Business Research. Stephanie received her B.S. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in 2012 from Florida Southern College. She received her M.S. in Medical Sciences (2015) and her Ph.D. in Molecular Pharmacology (2016) from the University of South Florida. Stephanie was a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Kentucky in the Department of Neurology. In addition to her postdoctoral appointment, she also interned part-time with the UK Office of Technology Commercialization from January to July 2019.



Stacie Gutowski, Ph.D.

Program Director

National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering
(NIBIB)

Stacie Gutowski is a program director at the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB) in the Office of Program Evaluation and Strategic Partnerships. She manages a portfolio of small business grants for a range of technologies in the bioengineering space. Additionally, she supports the Blueprint MedTech and RadX Initiatives, which are cross-IC programs supporting broad cohorts of teams developing a range of innovative medical products. Previously, she served as Program Officer in the small business team at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) where she managed a grant portfolio of medical devices to address substance use disorders. Prior to joining NIH, she served as a lead reviewer for neurological medical devices in CDRH/OHT5 at the Food and Drug Administration. Stacie earned a B.S. in Biomedical Engineering from Worcester Polytechnic Institute and a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering from Georgia Tech.

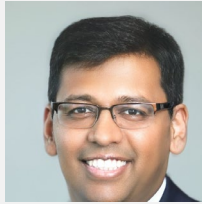


Kenneth Kim, M.S.

Acting Small Business Program Coordinator

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)

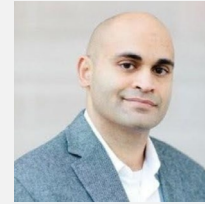
Kenneth Kim is the Acting Small Business Program Manager for the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), where he supports small businesses advancing innovative technologies in infectious diseases and related areas. Prior to joining NIAID, Kenneth co-founded a medical device company that developed and commercialized a novel indwelling urinary catheter. Earlier in his career, he conducted infectious disease research and contributed to medical countermeasure development at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID). His experience spans biomedical research, entrepreneurship, technology commercialization, and federal programs supporting small business innovation.



Vasudev Rao, M.B.B.S., M.S.

Program Chief, Division of AIDS Research
National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

Dr. Vasudev Rao is a physician-scientist and NIH program leader at the National Institute of Mental Health, where he serves as Acting Branch Chief and SBIR Program Director and oversees research spanning HIV pathogenesis, therapeutics, cure, and small-business innovation portfolios. His responsibilities include leadership of multidisciplinary NeuroHIV programs, federal research contracts, Interagency agreements and clinical trials, with scientific interests encompassing CNS complications, neuroimaging, the gut-brain axis, HIV reservoirs, immunotherapies, and translational therapeutics. He also co-chairs the trans-NIH New Approach Methodologies Working Group and the trans-NIH Brain, Behavior, and HIV Working Group, helping shape cross-NIH scientific priorities and collaborative research strategies. He has additionally advanced research infrastructure, data modernization, and commercialization initiatives across NIH-supported programs. Previously, Dr. Rao served on the faculty at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where he undertook translational HIV neuropathogenesis research, developed novel blood-brain barrier and CNS drug-delivery models, and helped train multidisciplinary research teams.



Rahul Thakar, Ph.D.

*Acting Director, NHLBI Catalyze Program; Program Director,
Advanced Technologies and Surgery Branch*
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)

Rahul Thakar is the Acting Scientific Director and Contract Officer Representative for NHLBI's Catalyze Program. Catalyze provides comprehensive suite of support and services to facilitate the transition of basic science discoveries into viable diagnostic and therapeutic candidates that have been cleared for human testing, and to develop a translational research workforce fluent in product development and entrepreneurship for heart, lung, blood, and sleep-focused applications. He continues to maintain a portfolio that intersects cardiovascular-related regenerative medicine, mechanobiology, and synthetic biology topics. He currently serves as a NHLBI representative for Complement-ARIE (the NIH Common Fund's NAMs initiative) and CellFAB-BRIC (Cell therapy FABrication – Biomanufacturing Resources, Infrastructure, and Coordination via NIH Common Fund). Previously, Dr. Thakar also contributed to NHLBI's efforts on the NHLBI-NIDDK Cardiovascular Repository for Type-1 Diabetes (CaRe-T1D), NIH Pediatric Research Consortium-Medical Devices (N-PeRC-MD), Somatic Cell Genome Editing (SCGE) Program, and the NIH's Synthetic Biology Consortium (including NHLBI-focused synthetic biology efforts). He also coordinated his Division's SBIR/STTR Programs. He has additional responsibilities with NIH's administration of NHLBI's Catalyze Program and the Regenerative Medicine Innovation Project as the Contract Officer Representative. Prior to joining NHLBI, Dr. Thakar held positions at the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs and the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine.