

Introduction and Background

In November 2010, The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) commissioned the leadership team of John W. Creswell, Ann Klassen, Vicki L. Plano Clark, and Katherine Clegg Smith to develop a resource that would provide guidance to NIH investigators on how to rigorously develop and evaluate mixed methods research applications. Pursuant to this, the team developed this report of “best practices” following three major objectives.

To develop practices that:

- ❖ assist investigators using mixed methods as they develop competitive applications for support from NIH;
- ❖ assist reviewers and staff for review panels at NIH who evaluate applications that include mixed methods research;
- ❖ provide the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR), and the NIH Institutes and Centers, with “best practices” to use as they consider potential contributions of mixed methods research, select reviewers, plan new initiatives, and set priority areas for their science.

OBSSR convened a Working Group of 18 individuals (see Appendix A. NIH Working Group on Developing Best Practices for Mixed Methods Research) to review a preliminary draft of “best practices.” This Group was composed of experienced scientists, research methodologists, and NIH health scientists. These individuals were selected because of their expertise in NIH investigations, their specific knowledge of mixed methods research, and their experience in the scientific review process. The composition of the Working Group was diverse with members representing fields such as public health, medicine, mental health professions, psychology, sociology, anthropology, social work, education, and nursing. This Working Group met in late April 2011, and reviewed and made recommendations for the final document presented in this report.

This report consists of seven sections:

- ❖ **The Need for Best Practices**
- ❖ **The Nature and Design of Mixed Methods Research**
- ❖ **Teamwork, Infrastructure, Resources, and Training for Mixed Methods Research**
- ❖ **Developing an R Series Plan that Incorporates Mixed Methods Research**
- ❖ **Beyond the R Series – High-Quality Mixed Methods Activities in Successful Fellowship, Career, Training, and Center Grant Applications**
- ❖ **Reviewing Mixed Methods Applications**
- ❖ **Overall Recommendations**

