



Alliance for NIDILRR Grantees

Advancing Disability Research and Development

The ask: Raise NIDILRR's annual budget to \$150M

The National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), located in the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living (ACL), is the federal government's primary applied disability research organization, and it is extraordinarily productive. As a researcher in the NIDILRR portfolio, you are part of a national enterprise that transforms federal investment into measurable gains for the more than 61 million Americans living with a disability. Unfortunately, NIDILRR's budget (approximately \$119 million) has remained essentially flat for decades (e.g., its FY2001 budget of \$110 million would exceed \$190 million in today's 2026 dollars). The Alliance for NIDILRR Grantees (ANG) needs your help in supporting our request to raise NIDILRR's annual budget to \$150 million. The talking points below summarize the value of this federal investment and ask that you share this information with your institutional leaders and congressional representatives.

NIDILRR Return on Investment

Strong Research Output Per Dollar

NIDILRR has funded over 1,500 discrete research projects benefiting people of all ages with all types of disabilities. The Institute's peer review process for all grant applications is selective and inclusive, with less than 21% of applications resulting in awards. A recent report to Congress shows grantees produced 641 peer-reviewed publications and dozens of tools and technologies in FY2023.

Workforce Investment That Compounds Over Time

Early-career investments yield decades of impact. NIDILRR has awarded more than 300 Switzer Fellowships, funding individual researchers to conduct research on disability, independent living, and rehabilitation. The Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training (ARRT) program supports ~70 postdoctoral fellows annually.

A Unique Federal Niche No Other Agency Fills

NIDILRR invests specifically in long-term rehabilitation outcomes: independence, community participation, and employment, unlike NIH, NSF, and other federal funders focused on disease prevention and cures. It is the only federal research portfolio spanning all disability types and ages, with strong links to ACL service delivery.

Knowledge Translation & Infrastructure

NIDILRR funding supports projects that develop high-quality knowledge and products to improve practice, policy, and system capacity, and helps get this information and technology to people with disabilities. Model Systems maintain world-leading longitudinal datasets that shape national standards of care for traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, and severe burns.

Economic Returns & Market Reach

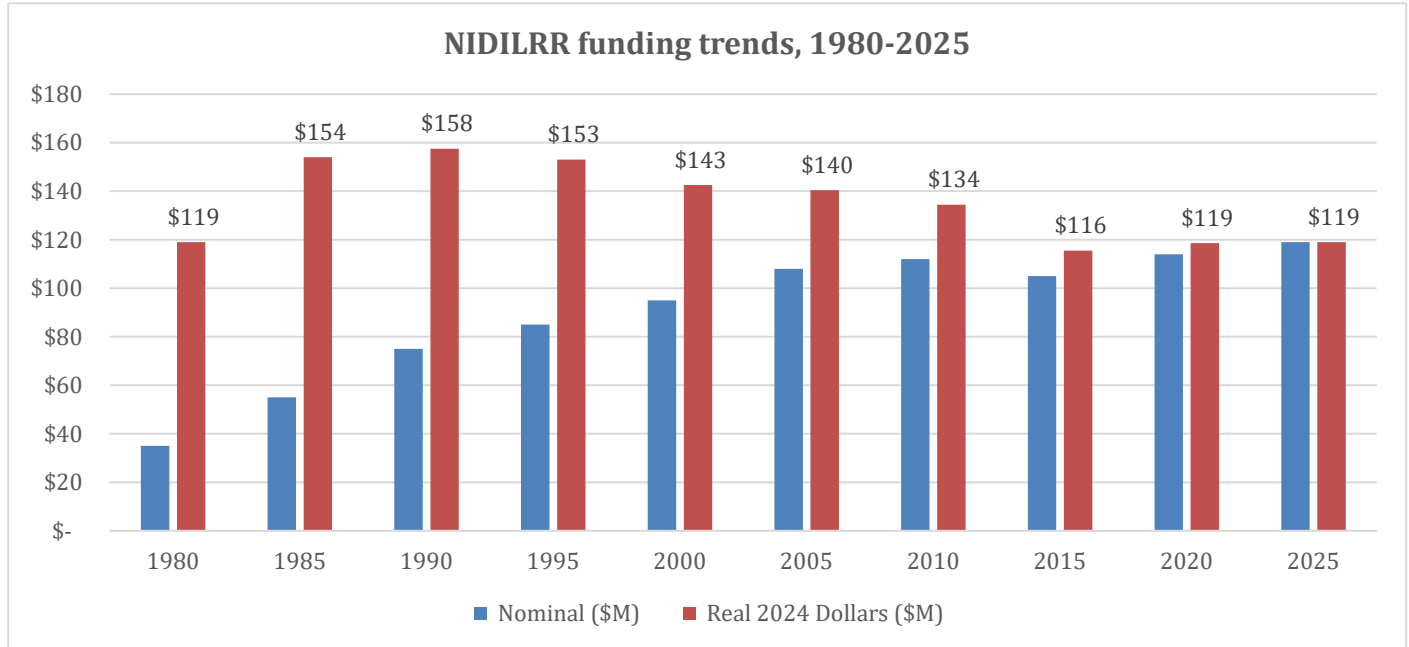
The NIDILRR-funded Vocational Rehabilitation ROI project found that VR clients experienced significant earnings gains and reduced reliance on public benefits, delivering measurable returns to taxpayers. For every federal dollar invested, employment outcomes improved and public assistance costs declined. Its Small Business Innovation Research program catalyzes the commercialization of assistive technologies, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Network provides no-cost guidance to thousands of businesses, employers, government agencies, and members of the public each year.

NIDILRR Budget Trends (FY1980–FY2025)

NIDILRR Appropriations: Nominal vs. Real Dollars

In nominal terms, NIDILRR appropriations show gradual increases punctuated by extended periods of stagnation. While nominal appropriations have grown modestly, from approximately \$60 million in FY1980 to roughly \$119 million today, inflation-adjusted values reveal that NIDILRR's real capacity has not kept pace. A FY2001 appropriation of \$110 million is equivalent to approximately \$190 million in 2024 dollars, representing a real loss of more than \$70 million in annual purchasing power.

Chart 1: NIDILRR Nominal vs. Inflation-Adjusted Appropriations, FY1980–FY2025



Implications

Despite its central and statutorily mandated role in disability and rehabilitation research, NIDILRR has not received funding commensurate with that role. Its purchasing power peaked more than three decades ago and has been declining ever since. The \$150 million request for FY2027 is a restoration, not an expansion: it would only partially recover what inflation has already eroded. Without this investment, grant competitions will continue to shrink, promising research will go unfunded, and the next generation of disability researchers will be lost. Congress has an opportunity to reverse this decline and ensure that 61 million Americans with disabilities have a federal research program that matches the scale of their needs. We urge your support.

For more information: www.joinANG.org

Join our LinkedIn group, the Alliance for NIDILRR Grantees: www.linkedin.com/groups/16004105/

Contact the current ANG President:

Jae Kennedy, PhD, Professor of Community and Behavioral Health
Elson S Floyd College of Medicine, Washington State University
412 E Spokane Falls Blvd, Spokane WA 99202-2131
jjkennedy@wsu.edu
(509) 368-6971 (office)