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FDA Broad Agency Announcement Day

JANUARY 20, 2026

FDA Broad Agency Announcement Day

January 20, 2026

Speaker Bios

2026 BAA Day Presenters List:

- Ms. Shaila Shaheed, ORES
- Mr. Ian Weiss, OAGS
- Ms. Jessika Alfaro, ORES
- Mr. Robert Orr, ORES
- Dr. Rebekah Zinn, OCE
- Dr. Michele Lee, CDRH
- Dr. Sam Raney, CDER
- Dr. Alexis Norris, CVM
- Dr. David Longstaff, CVM
- Dr. Joyce Obidi, OWH



Shaila Shaheed, M.S.

Director, Regulatory Science Research

Office of Regulatory and Emerging Science (ORES)/ Office of The Chief Scientist (OCS)/ Office of The Commissioner (OC)

Shaila Shaheed currently serves as the director for the Regulatory Science Research Staff at the Office of Regulatory and Emerging Science (ORES), directing FDA-wide programs that support both intramural and extramural regulatory science initiatives.

Since joining the Office of The Chief Scientist (OCS) in 2013, Shaila led the Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) Research & Development program for over eight years, managing an annual investment portfolio of \$50-70M. She is highly knowledgeable in the FDA's Focus Area of Regulatory Science (FARS) and has worked closely with subject matter experts across the FDA to identify regulatory science research gaps and align projects with the agency's annual research priorities.

In 2022, Shaila became a supervisor, providing leadership and direction for staff working on a range of cross-cutting programs, including the BAA, Centers of Excellence in Regulatory Science, and Innovation (CERSI), FDA Scientific Working Groups, IT automation and business operations.

In 2024, Shaila completed a four-month detail assignment at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Grants (OG). During this time, she contributed to the development and modernization of a government-wide shared services program for grants.

Shaila completed the FDA Key Executive Leadership Certificate Program from the School of Public Affairs at American University in September 2024. She holds an M.S. in Biotechnology with a concentration in Regulatory Affairs from Johns Hopkins University and a B.S. in Biology from George Mason University.



Ian Weiss

Ian Weiss is the Branch Chief for the Scientific Support Branch (SSB) of the Office of Acquisitions and Grants Services (OAGS) and is the Contracting Lead for the Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) program. Mr. Weiss has over 14 years of Contracting experience, and has served on both the Contracting and Programmatic sides of the contracting table. He has a passion for finding common ground and innovative solutions to contracting issues that benefit all parties.

Ian brings 20 years of active duty Coast Guard experience to the table, both as an enlisted member and a Warrant Officer. In addition, his civilian experience includes time with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), The US Coast Guard (USCG) and the Food and Drug Administration. Mr. Weiss has lead several high profile contracting efforts over his career, such the Next Generation HURREVAC – Hurricane Decision Support platform with FEMA, DHS and USACE, The refit of the Coast Guard Cutter Healy and updates to the century old Washington Aqueduct. Ian is proud to now serve the FDA and to help guide the evolution of the FDA BAA program.



Jessika Alfaro, M.S.

Program Manager, FDA Broad Agency Announcement Program

Office of Regulatory and Emerging Science (ORES)/Office of The Chief Scientist (OCS)/Office of the Commissioner (OC)

Jessika Alfaro joined the Office of The Chief Scientist (OCS) in 2018 and serves as a program manager to the FDA Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) program. She provides critical support for the BAA program and is responsible for cross-agency communication and coordination to facilitate the BAA review process. Additionally, she serves as a contracting office representative (COR) for one of ORES's contracts and has provided support to the Center of Excellence in Regulatory Science & Innovation (CERSI) program and OCS Challenge grant. Jessika's dedication contributes toward a highly effective program with sustained growth that is critical to FDA's ability to stay at the forefront of regulating emerging technologies. Jessika started at FDA in 2011 as a student intern and worked in Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER), Office of Surveillance and Epidemiology. In 2015, she joined CDER's Office of Generic Drugs in the Office of Research Standards and supported the Generic Drug User Fee Amendments (GDUFA) regulatory science research program. In 2017, she joined to CDER's Office of New Drugs in the Office of Antimicrobial Products where she supported the regulatory research science program.

Jessika is a COR-Level I and holds a Project Management Certificate from Duke University. She obtained her Master of Science in Regulatory Science from the University of Maryland, School of Pharmacy, and a Bachelor of Science in Public Health Science from The University of Maryland, College Park.



Robert “Bobby” Orr

Robert “Bobby” Orr is a biologist and project manager for the MCMi extramural Regulatory Science Program. He currently serves as a contracting officer representative (COR) and technical point of contact for both ORES and OCS contracts and grants. Prior to joining FDA, Bobby consulted on the Agricultural Defense portfolio in the Department of Homeland Security, Chemical & Biological Defense Division. Bobby earned a BS in biology from James Madison University and an MS in biodefense from George Mason University.



Rebekah Zinn, PhD

Rebekah is a Senior Advisor for Research Strategy and External Partnerships in the Oncology Center of Excellence (OCE) at FDA. Prior to joining the OCE, she managed regulatory science research collaborations and training activities in the Office of the Chief Scientist, Office of Regulatory Science and Innovation (OCS/ORSI) and served as the Program Leader for the Centers of Excellence in Regulatory Science and Innovation (CERSI). Rebekah has over 10 years of research experience in cancer biology and epigenetics. She earned a PhD from the Cellular & Molecular Medicine program at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and completed five years of postdoctoral research at JHU with a focus on lung cancer therapeutics.



Michele Lee, PhD

Dr. Michele Lee is a Regulatory Science Program Manager on the Partnerships to Advance Innovation and Regulatory Science (PAIRS) team in the Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH) at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. She coordinates CDRH's regulatory science research intramural and extramural funding programs and manages CDRH's public-private partnerships. She also serves on the Regulatory Science Workstream for CDRH's Advancing Health Equity Strategic Priority and the CDRH Critical Path Program Advisory Board. Dr. Lee began her time at the FDA in 2018 as a lead reviewer and materials chemistry consultant in Plastic Surgery Skin & Wound Healing Devices. Prior to joining the FDA, she completed her Ph.D. in Materials Science & Engineering at the University of Southern California. Her doctoral research focused on synthesis and characterization of novel stimuli-responsive polymers. Dr. Lee also holds a B.S. degree in Materials Science from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she conducted research in multifunctional coatings for nanoparticles.



Sam Raney, PhD

Dr. Sam Raney is the Associate Director for Science and Chief Scientific Advisor at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, where he oversees a \$100 Million portfolio of medical research. He has over 30 years of experience in pharmaceutical drug development, has provided over 50 invited keynote and symposium presentations at major scientific conferences around the world, has co-authored over 75 peer-reviewed scholarly publications and over 150 abstracts, and has led over 400 product development studies for numerous major pharmaceutical companies. Across his career, he has been a researcher and adjunct professor within academia, has held senior management roles in industry, and has been invited to serve on multiple expert committees and panels for the U.S. Pharmacopeia. Dr. Raney holds a Bachelor's degree in Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry from Yale University, and a Ph.D. in Biochemistry & Molecular Biology from the University of British Columbia in Canada.



Alexis Norris, PhD

Dr. Norris joined the FDA as a bioinformatics reviewer in 2018. At CVM, she evaluates omics data submitted to support new animal drug applications for intentional genomic alterations (IGAs) in animals. Dr. Norris also supports IGA-related research at CVM and co-chairs the FDA Omics Working Group.



David Longstaff, PhD

Dr. David Longstaff serves as a Branch Chief in the Division of Generic Animal Drugs within the Office of Generic Animal Drugs at the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM).

Dr. Longstaff began his FDA career in 2008 as a reviewer in the Division of Manufacturing Technologies at CVM, where he developed expertise in evaluating the quality and manufacturing aspects of veterinary drug applications. In 2016, he transitioned to a Branch Chief position, specializing in bioequivalence evaluation—a critical component of generic drug approval that ensures therapeutic equivalence to reference products. His primary areas of focus include the evaluation and advancement of analytical techniques used to measure drug concentrations in biological samples, and developing innovative *in vitro* approaches to demonstrate bioequivalence as alternatives to traditional *in vivo* studies, supporting both regulatory efficiency and animal welfare considerations.

Dr. Longstaff earned his B.Sc.(hons) in Microbiology and Genetics from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. He subsequently completed both his M.S. and Ph.D. in Microbiology at The Ohio State University.



Joyce Obidi, PhD

Joyce Obidi is the Health Programs Coordinator in the Office of Women's Health. She leads the Extramural Research Program for OWH. Her research background is in translational oncology research. In 2012, Dr. Obidi graduated from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine with a doctoral degree in Cellular and Molecular Medicine. After completing her dissertation, Dr. Obidi completed her post-doctoral research at MedImmune, the global biologics R&D arm of AstraZeneca. She worked on developing assays that could be used to optimize new therapeutic strategies and personalized medicine which could aid in the stratification of cancer patients. Dr. Obidi joined FDA in 2016 as a recipient of the FDA Commissioner's Fellowship. She focused on understanding how to harness electronic health records to complement FDA's post market surveillance activities.