

Research Collaborations

Scope

This policy applies to all research collaborations involving HHMI laboratories, including laboratories at Janelia Research Campus (“Janelia”).

HHMI laboratory heads referred to in this policy are Investigators and Freeman Hrabowski Scholars at HHMI’s host-based sites and, at Janelia, Senior Group Leaders, Group Leaders, and Fellows. For purposes of this policy, collaborations of a member of an HHMI laboratory are considered to be collaborations of the laboratory head, regardless of whether the laboratory member is an HHMI employee. For example, a proposed collaboration between a company and a postdoctoral fellow who is in an Investigator’s or Freeman Hrabowski Scholar’s laboratory but is not employed by HHMI is considered to be a collaboration of the Investigator or Freeman Hrabowski Scholar.

Policy

In General

HHMI recognizes the importance of scientific collaborations between its laboratories and other scientists, and strongly encourages such collaborations as an essential part of scientific research.

HHMI laboratories may collaborate with colleagues at other non-profit or academic institutions and with colleagues at for-profit companies. This policy applies to any collaborative research involving an HHMI laboratory. Collaborative projects with companies where the HHMI Investigator’s or Freeman Hrabowski Scholar’s participation in the project is supported in whole or in part from commercial sources are not covered by this policy, but are instead reviewed and approved in accordance with the terms of [HHMI’s policy on Company Funding Arrangements – Host-based Sites](#). Other HHMI policies may also be applicable to a collaboration, depending on the circumstances.

Because of the importance of keeping HHMI research separate from consulting activities, HHMI does not permit research collaborations between laboratory heads and the companies for which they consult. Please refer to [HHMI’s policies on Consulting](#) for more information on this point.

Conflict of interest issues may arise where a researcher has an equity interest in a company with which they are collaborating. If a laboratory head proposes to collaborate with a company in which they own equity, HHMI will consider whether it is appropriate for the researcher to engage in the collaboration while holding the equity interest. In evaluating these situations, HHMI will consider such factors as the nature of the collaborative work, the significance of the collaboration to the company and to the laboratory, the amount of the equity interest, how large the company is and whether it is publicly held, and how the equity was obtained. If a collaboration involves human subjects research, additional restrictions may apply.

Collaborations with Academic Colleagues

Documentation

Projects with no commercial funding: HHMI ordinarily does not require documentation or any formal approval of collaborations of its laboratory heads with scientists at not-for-profit institutions or government agencies where the laboratory head's participation in the project is supported entirely from non-profit or governmental funding sources, for example, from their HHMI budget, NIH or other governmental grants, or other non-profit funding sources. In some cases, the collaborating scientist's organization or an HHMI laboratory head's host institution may require an agreement documenting this type of collaboration. HHMI laboratory heads should send any such agreements to the [HHMI attorney](#) responsible for their site for review and negotiation. For collaborations involving an Investigator or Freeman Hrabowski Scholar, HHMI will coordinate negotiation of the agreement with the host institution.

Projects with commercial funding: If an Investigator or Freeman Hrabowski Scholar wishes to use funding from a commercial source to support research in their HHMI laboratory on a collaborative project with one or more colleagues at another non-profit or academic institution or a governmental agency, the project must be reviewed and approved by HHMI in accordance with [HHMI's policy on Company Funding Arrangements – Host-based Sites](#). In addition, if an Investigator or Freeman Hrabowski Scholar and an academic colleague are contemplating a significant scientific collaboration (that is, something more substantial and formal than a sharing or exchange of ideas or material), the Investigator or Freeman Hrabowski Scholar should inquire whether the collaborator's share of the project is or may be supported by industry funding; if so, the Investigator or Freeman Hrabowski Scholar should discuss the situation with the [HHMI attorney](#) responsible for the site. Similarly, a Senior Group Leader, Group Leader, or Fellow who is contemplating a significant collaboration with an academic colleague should inquire about corporate funding of the project, and if there is such funding should discuss the situation with the Janelia Director, Innovations and External Relations, who should consult with the [HHMI attorney](#) responsible for Janelia. Depending on the circumstances, a written agreement may be advisable to protect the laboratory head's research and ability to publish their results.

Collaboration/Consulting Concerns: HHMI's policy against both consulting for and collaborating with a company may also apply if a laboratory collaborates with an academic colleague who in turn collaborates on the same scientific project with a company for which the laboratory head consults. If an HHMI laboratory head and company scientists are both authors on the publication of the collaborative results, there will be at least an appearance that the HHMI scientist is collaborating with the company. An Investigator or Freeman Hrabowski Scholar should discuss this type of situation with the [HHMI attorney](#) responsible for the site. A Senior Group Leader, Group Leader or Fellow should discuss this type of situation with the Janelia Director, Innovations and External Relations, who should consult with the [HHMI attorney](#) responsible for Janelia.

Collaborations with For-Profit Companies

Documentation

Any research collaboration with industry colleagues should be documented in advance with an agreement signed by HHMI management on behalf of HHMI. This requirement also applies to extensions or modifications of existing research collaborations with companies.

An Investigator or Freeman Hrabowski Scholar wishing to pursue a research collaboration with a company and proposing to cover all of their costs associated with the project from their HHMI budget or other nonprofit sources should complete the HHMI Research Collaboration Questionnaire on the [HHMI Science Portal](#). A Senior Group Leader, Group Leader, or Fellow should discuss the proposed collaboration with the Janelia Director, Innovations and External Relations, who should consult with the [HHMI attorney](#) responsible for Janelia.

Terms: HHMI's preference is that collaborations with companies be documented using, for Investigators and Freeman Hrabowski Scholars, the [HHMI Host-Based Model Research Collaboration Agreement](#), and for Senior Group Leaders, Group Leaders, or Fellows at Janelia, the [HHMI Janelia-Based Model Research Collaboration Agreement](#). These agreements normally require negotiation to take into account the details of the specific collaboration. Negotiations are handled by HHMI's Office of General Counsel in coordination with the Science Department or Janelia management, the researchers involved, and the host institution in the case of Investigators and Freeman Hrabowski Scholars.

Companies that enter into scientific collaboration agreements with HHMI will reasonably expect some commercial benefit in return. In most cases, the company will be granted an option to negotiate for a commercial license to some or all of the results of the collaboration. The company will also typically receive a limited right of pre-publication review to protect its intellectual property. The company's rights to the research results must be commensurate with its scientific contribution to the collaboration.

Company Funding Issues: A research collaboration for purposes of this policy does not include any arrangement in which the company is providing financial support for research in the HHMI laboratory. Collaborative projects with companies where the HHMI Investigator's or Freeman Hrabowski Scholar's participation in the project is supported in whole or in part from commercial sources, for example, funding under a company sponsored research agreement, or a company gift or grant, are reviewed and approved in accordance with the terms of [HHMI's policy on Company Funding Arrangements – Host-based Sites](#). HHMI is a party to an agreement that includes company funding and HHMI must review and approve the agreement. Investigators or Freeman Hrabowski Scholars proposing to collaborate with a company and to receive funding or other financial benefit from the company should complete HHMI's Company Funding Questionnaire on the [HHMI Science Portal](#).

Related Procedures, Forms and Policies

- [Company Funding Arrangements – Host-based Sites](#)
- [Consulting for Companies – General Policy](#)
- Research Collaboration Questionnaire on the [HHMI Science Portal](#)
- [HHMI Host-Based Model Research Collaboration Agreement](#)
- [HHMI-Janelia Model Research Collaboration Agreement](#)

- Company Funding Questionnaire on the [HHMI Science Portal](#)

Contact

Investigators or Freeman Hrabowski Scholars with questions about this policy should raise them with the [HHMI attorney](#) responsible for the site. Senior Group Leaders, Group Leaders, or Fellows should raise any questions about this policy with the Janelia Director, Innovations and External Relations or the [HHMI attorney](#) responsible for Janelia.

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