

NIH OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Questions for Scientific Collaborators

Although each research project has unique features, certain core issues are common to most of them and can be addressed by collaborators posing the following questions:

Overall Goals and Vision

1. What is the overall vision for the collaboration?
2. What are the scientific issues, goals, and anticipated outcomes or products of the collaboration?
3. When is the collaboration over?
4. When is the project over?

Who Will Do What?

1. What are the expected contributions of each participant?
2. Who will write any progress reports and final reports?
3. How, and by whom, will personnel decisions be made? How and by whom will personnel be supervised?
4. How and by whom will data be managed? How will access to data be managed? How will you handle long-term storage and access to data after the project is complete?

Authorship, Credit

1. What will be the criteria and the process for assigning authorship and credit?
2. How will credit be attributed to each collaborator's institution for public presentations, abstracts, and written articles?
3. How and by whom will public presentations be made?
4. How and by whom will media inquiries be handled?
5. When and how will you handle intellectual property and patent applications?

Contingencies & Communicating

1. What will be your mechanism for routine communications among members of the research team (to ensure that all appropriate members of the team are kept fully informed of relevant issues)?
2. How will you decide about redirecting the research agenda as discoveries are made?
3. How will you negotiate the development of new collaborations and spin-off projects, if any?
4. Should one of the principals of the research team move to another institution or leave the project, how will you handle, data, specimens, lab books, and authorship and credit?

Conflict of Interest

1. How will you identify potential conflicts of interest among collaborators?
2. Could a collaborator, or any close family members or associates benefit financially from the research?
3. Is a collaborator receiving money from someone who could benefit financially from the research?