

Research Policies

Consulting

Service as a Member of a Company's Board of Directors (SC-530)

Policy

This policy applies to service by an HHMI laboratory head as a member of a company's board of directors. It should be read in conjunction with [HHMI Policy SC-500, Consulting for Companies - General Policy](#), which also applies to this type of consulting activity.

This policy applies only to HHMI laboratory heads (e.g., HHMI Investigators and Early Career Scientists at HHMI's host-based sites, and Group Leaders at HHMI's Janelia Research Campus). Other laboratory employees are not permitted to serve on a company's board of directors.

Service by a laboratory head as a corporate board member may entail fiduciary obligations and conflicts of interest that raise concerns under HHMI policies. For this reason, HHMI considers all relevant circumstances in reviewing a proposal to serve on a company's board of directors, including the following factors:

1. Is any of the company's work related to ongoing HHMI research of the laboratory head? If so, service on the company's board is less likely to be approved.
2. Is technology developed by the laboratory head licensed or proposed to be licensed to the company? If so, service on the company's board is less likely to be approved.
3. Does the laboratory head otherwise consult for the company, for example as a member of the company's SAB, or otherwise have more than incidental scientific contact with the company? If so, service on the company's board is less likely to be approved.
4. Does the laboratory head directly or indirectly own more than a minimal amount of stock in the company because of his or her consulting services, or through a license of intellectual property to the company? If so, service on the company's board is less likely to be approved.

Taking into account these factors, ordinarily HHMI will not approve service on the board of directors of a start-up company formed around technology developed by the laboratory head.

A laboratory head interested in serving on a company's board of directors should contact his or her [HHMI attorney](#) to initiate HHMI's review of the proposal.

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