

What is a “Person Month” & How Do I Calculate It?

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A “person month” is the metric for expressing the effort (amount of time) principal investigators (PIs), faculty and other senior personnel devote to a specific project. The effort is based on the type of appointment of the individual with the organization; e.g., calendar year (CY), academic year (AY), and/or summer term (SM); and the organization’s definition of such. For instance, some institutions define the academic year as a 9-month appointment while others define it as a 10-month appointment.

Conversion of percentage of effort to person months is straight-forward. To calculate person months, multiply the percentage of your effort associated with the project times the number of months of your appointment. For example:

25% of a 9 month academic year appointment equals 2.25 (AY) person months ($9 \times 0.25 = 2.25$)

10% of a 12 month calendar appointment equals 1.2 (CY) person months ($12 \times 0.10 = 1.2$)

35% of a 3 month summer term appointment equals 1.05 (SM) person months ($3 \times 0.35 = 1.05$)

10% of a 0.5 FTE 12 month appointment equals 0.6 (CY) person months ($12 \times .5 \times .1 = 0.6$)

Another example:

If the regular pay schedule of an institution is a 9 month academic year and the PI will devote 9 months at 30% time/effort and 3 months summer term at 30% time/effort to the project, then 2.7 academic months and .9 summer months should be listed in the academic and summer term blocks of the application ($9 \times 30\% = 2.7$ person months; $3 \times 30\% = .9$)

An [Excel-based Percent of Time & Effort to Person Months Calculator](#) is available on grants.nih.gov.

Have additional questions related to NIH’s usage of “person months”? Visit our page of [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#) on this topic.