

## Research Administration Services

Research Administration Services (RAS) is a service unit within the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) that functions as a central hub to support MIT investigators and research administrators by directly providing:

- Federal, state, local, and other grant and contract administration services
- Research subawards management
- Post-award management services for all sponsored programs

In addition, RAS is closely aligned with other OVPR service areas that provide:

- Research administration support and training
- Research administration systems development and maintenance
- Research compliance: research integrity, export control, financial conflict of interest, and more

RAS also works with the Office of Strategic Alliances and Technology Transfer (OSATT), within the Provost's Office, which develops agreements to facilitate MIT projects, programs, and consortia with industrial, nonprofit, and international sponsors, partners, and collaborators.

## Leadership and Structure

In April 2021, Professor Krystyn Van Vliet expanded her responsibilities to serve as associate vice president for research in addition to her role as associate provost. In this new role, she now oversees RAS, as well as Research Development, Research Facilities, and related areas of research administration systems and reporting within OVPR, while retaining her oversight of OSATT. This change is part of an overarching plan to reimagine research administration at MIT that was announced by OVPR in September 2018. The goal is to provide comprehensive, high-level service to all MIT investigators.

RAS remains under the direct leadership of Colleen Leslie, assistant provost for research administration, who coordinates RAS services with the related OVPR service units that are crucial to the research administration function.

## Research Administration Services

- Grants and contracts teams
- Research subawards team

## Integrated Services

- Research administration systems and support teams
- Data services team

## Responding to New Federal Sponsor Requirements

In order to address growing concerns about undue foreign influence in research, federal sponsors have issued updated disclosure requirements for researchers as well as more restrictive contract terms for certain federally funded research programs. RAS sponsor liaisons have been working with the research compliance, research support, and communications teams in OVPR, as well as with the MIT Office of the General Counsel, to develop procedures, tools, and training to help MIT researchers comply with these new terms and requirements while continuing to encourage the international collaborations that are vital to the advancement of science. Examples include:

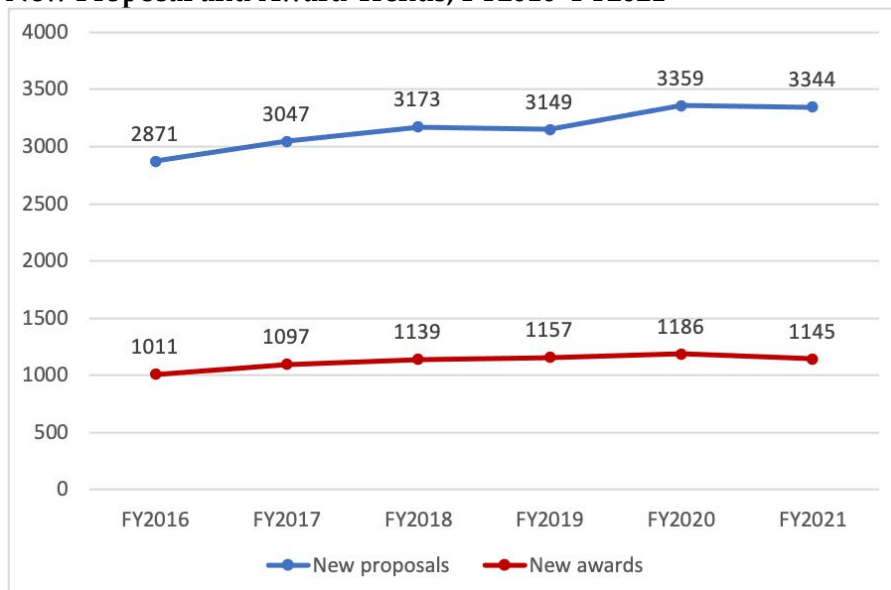
- Sponsor-specific disclosure guidance, checklists, and resources on the RAS website
- Detailed sponsor-specific training presented to all RAS contract administrators
- A research administration practices session to introduce research administrators to the SciENcv tool used by some federal agencies to prepare biographical sketches and current, or pending, or other, support documents
- Procedures for helping researchers identify problematic foreign talent recruitment programs, and advice on how to respond to new contract terms in a manner consistent with MIT’s policy on [Open Research and the Free Interchange of Information](#).

## Maintaining Operations During a Full Year of Remote Work

While MIT COVID-19 restrictions required the OVPR and RAS operations teams to continue working remotely throughout the year, the teams adapted to the needs of MIT researchers and research administrators, maintaining robust services despite ongoing challenges.

The grants and contracts teams reviewed and submitted a total of 3,344 proposals this year (down <1% from FY2020) and processed 1,145 new awards (down 3% from FY2020).

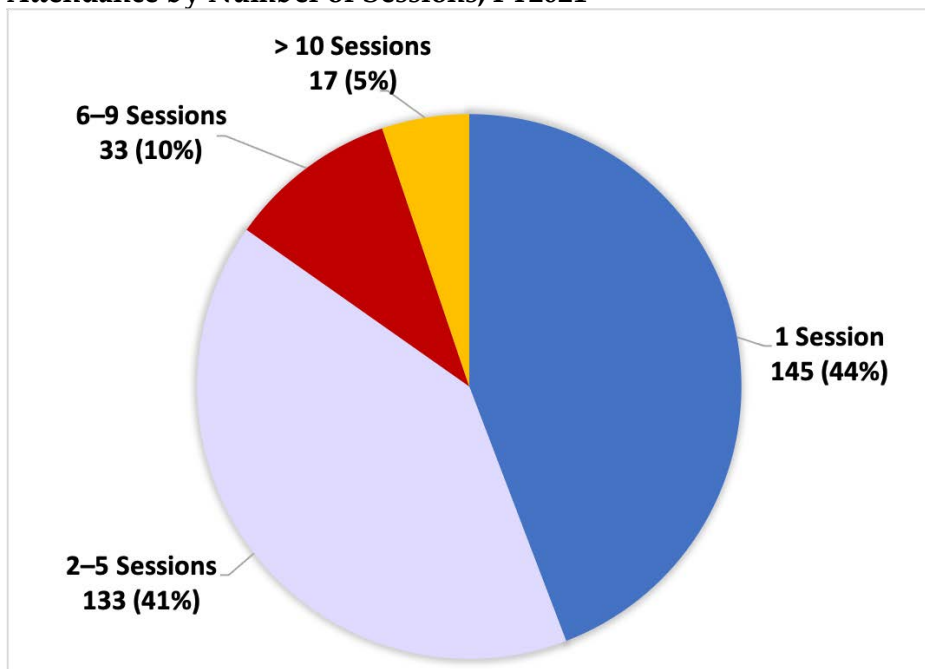
**New Proposal and Award Trends, FY2016–FY2021**



The research subawards team experienced significant staff turnover during the past year, onboarding and training several new team members. To maintain service in the midst of rebuilding, the team diversified roles and tasks. Despite these challenges—and with its members continuing to work fully remotely—the team provided all expected services.

The Research Administration Hub, a program within research administration systems and support, offered 20 educational opportunities in FY2021 as well as on-demand eLearning modules and virtual drop-in sessions to provide the user community with flexibility and just-in-time learning solutions. Approximately 75% of the research administration community participated in these educational offerings, with many individuals attending multiple sessions.

**Attendance by Number of Sessions, FY2021**



**Looking to the Future**

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 gave new meaning and a sense of urgency to our plans to reimagine research administration at MIT. As COVID-19 restrictions to campus access are lifted and we begin the transition back to campus in fall 2021, we are evaluating what we have learned from this challenging period and how to apply it moving forward in order to remain nimble and responsive to the needs of the MIT research community.

**Colleen Leslie**  
**Assistant Provost for Research Administration**  
**Office of the Vice President for Research—Research Administration Services**