Office of the Provost

Guidelines for Establishing New Institute Entities:
What Faculty and Staff Need to Know

Updated November 2026

Introduction

This guide is for faculty and staff leaders interested in establishing new entities (alliances, centers, hubs, initiatives, laboratories, projects, etc.) to house their work in research, education, innovation, and other areas. It is meant to provide clear answers to key questions: How should the entity be named? Who needs to be consulted? How is naming reviewed when a donor or sponsor is involved?

The guide is based on the recommendations of the Committee on Guidelines for Establishing New Institute Entities (GENIE), charged in 2026 by Provost Anantha Chandrakasan with documenting a clear, Institute-wide process for establishing and naming new entities, applicable regardless of funding source. The GENIE recommendations are designed to bring consistency, transparency, and strategic alignment to a process that until now has been largely invisible, while maintaining existing systems for everything involving funding (such as gift acceptance), compliance, and risk review. More information about the committee can be found here [LINK].

It's important to note that the naming of an entity does not itself authorize the underlying activities, funding, or agreements; conversely, the successful establishment of a sponsored project or gift does not automatically confer approval to use a specific name or to represent the activity as an Institute-level entity. This new process does not replace, bypass, or modify MIT's existing processes for sponsored projects, philanthropic gifts, or other revenue-generating agreements. The Institute's Use of Name Officer should also be engaged regarding donor/sponsor communications. And all activities conducted within any entity remain subject to MIT policies and procedures, legal obligations, and applicable sponsor or donor requirements.

A note on terminology: For the purposes of this report, the term entity is used in the broad, everyday sense. It does not refer to a legal entity separate from MIT.

Why is there a need for these guidelines?

MIT's culture is entrepreneurial: community members want to start new things. This is a great strength. But having some basic guidelines in place can ensure that new efforts don't overlap or conflict unnecessarily with existing ones; help prevent a profusion of new named entities that don't yet have the strategic underpinnings or resources they need to succeed; and protect MIT's reputation.

When do I follow these guidelines?

If you are a principal investigator (or group of PIs) interested in starting a new entity – for any reason – follow these guidelines. An entity basically means anything with a public name and, likely, a website. It includes, but is not limited to, alliances, centers, hubs, programs, projects, and more. These guidelines apply *regardless of the proposed entity's funding source* (sponsored, gift, other revenue, or some combination of these).

There's an important exception: PIs' **own research groups** are exempt.

What is the process?

The process is simple:

STEP 1: First talk with your DLCI head or director. Then, with the support of your department or director, talk with your dean (or the Vice President for Research for VPR-reporting units).

The purpose of these discussions is to get early leadership buy-in for your idea. In seeking this early buy-in, principal investigators should be able to provide preliminary answers to a set of key questions, such as: What is the purpose of the new entity? Do others like it already exist at MIT, and if so, would joining those existing efforts be a better path? How will it be funded?

If it's helpful to structure this discussion, you can use this intake form prepared by the Office of the Provost, which you would need to complete in a later stage anyway.

STEP 2: After you have received endorsement from your DLCI head and dean, VPR, or vice provost, the next step depends on whether you already have funding in place for the entity.

If you **DO** have funding in place, move on to **step 3**.

If you **DO NOT** yet have funding in place, then in consultation with your dean, VPR, or vice provost, contact the appropriate office from the table below, if you have not done so already. If you expect to have a mix of funding types, or if you are not sure of funding type, contact OSATT. Once funding is in place, move on to **step 3**.

Funding type	Relevant office	Contact info
Sponsored funds	OSATT	osatt@mit.edu
Gift funds	Resource Development	contact-rd@mit.edu
Member fees	General Counsel	mitogc@mit.edu

STEP 3: Complete this intake form and submit it to the Provost's Office. The Provost's Office will confirm receipt and follow up with you on next steps.

STEP 4: When funding is in place, and with consent from the dean, the proposed entity would go to Provost's Cabinet[1] for review, discussion, and a determination (approve the proposal, reject it, or return it for modification). This approval process would cover not just the launch of the entity but also the name of the entity.

STEP 5: Once an entity is approved, it will be entered into a new Institute-wide inventory.

How long does the process take?

It is difficult to prescribe specific fixed timelines for establishing and naming new entities from the moment an entity is first proposed to the moment it is fully up and running. Timelines vary based on funding type and number of funders, among other factors; the process requires both careful relationship management and transactional expertise. Agreeing on a name alone might take extensive discussions with a donor, while adhering to MIT's gift acceptance policies. Establishment of sponsored agreements with non-federal sponsors can take weeks to months depending on how close the desired terms are to MIT's standard terms.

How do I select a name for the new entity?

A new Institute-wide taxonomy defines how entities are named. Its purpose is to promote clarity, consistency, and accurate signaling of scope, scale, and institutional commitment across all named entities. The name of every entity should include a label and a domain, and may also include the brand and the name of a sponsor or donor:

- **Label**: Is it a center? An initiative? Something else? Consult the table below for guidance on selecting a label. It is fine to propose a label not included in the table. Please note that the label "institute" should no longer be used.

Category	Typical labels	Characteristics	Typical home
Organizational (indefinite duration or highly specialized)	Academies, centers, laboratories, observatories	Governance, leadership, stewardship	School/College, Provost, or OVPR
Programmatic (time-bound, perhaps with opportunity for renewal, or uncertain duration)	Initiatives, programs, projects	Time- or scope-bound; nested	DLCI, School/College, or OVPR
Collaborative (multi-party, time-bound)	Alliances, consortia, hubs, networks	Defined by funding model & external relationships; often cross-unit	DLCI, School/College, Provost, or OVPR

[1] The Provost's Cabinet is the Provost, Vice President for Research, Deans, and Vice Provost for Faculty.

- **Domain:** What is the content area for the new entity? Domains must be clear, specific, durable (intelligible to a knowledgeable MIT faculty member 10 to 20 years from now), and to the extent possible, non-overlapping with existing MIT efforts.
- **Brand**: Where does “MIT” or the name of a unit appear in the name of the entity?
- **Donor or sponsor**: By the terms of an agreement, should the sponsor or donor’s name appear in the name of the entity?

In choosing the right label for an entity that is time-bound (i.e., has a 10-year planned lifespan), it may help to consider funding level, multi-PI or interdisciplinary scope, presence of physical space, and similar factors.

To better illustrate what all this means, here’s a real example, using the Martin Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship:

Martin Trust (Donor/Sponsor) + **Center** (Label) for +
MIT (Brand) + **Entrepreneurship** (Domain)

A note on web addresses and branding

New entities typically request an MIT web address and branding that aligns with their names. As with the name itself, it is important that web addresses be clear, specific, and durable, and that branding be in keeping with MIT’s brand guide. Whether to grant a specific web address and branding is an issue that can be taken up by Provost’s Cabinet alongside the establishment and naming of the entity itself.

What about PIs’ individual labs/research groups?

As noted earlier, each PI’s own research group is exempt from this process. However, the GENIE committee recommended that naming conventions for PI-led labs and research groups should clearly distinguish them from Institute-level entities, typically through association with the PI's name or equivalent descriptors (e.g., "X Lab," "Y Group, led by Professor Z"). Existing groups with established identities should incorporate clarifying language in public-facing materials to indicate their relationship to the PI.

A note about sponsors and donors

The GENIE committee recommended assigning Resource Development responsibility for Institute-wide guidance on adding a donor’s name to an entity, and that following development of this donor naming framework, MIT should align sponsor naming practices with donor naming principles. More details will be made available as this work takes shape.

Are the guidelines retroactive?

No. These guidelines apply only to new entities.

For more information, please write to genie@mit.edu.