

Preparing Forms for Your ATE Proposal: Calculating Person Months

This instruction sheet is derived directly from the Preparing Personnel Budgets and Forms for your NSF ATE Proposal, presented on May 21, 2025. The full webinar is available for viewing at: <https://tinyurl.com/MCFormsPersonnelWebinar> A comprehensive version of the Quick Reference Guide can be accessed at: <https://tinyurl.com/MCPersonnelForms>

Person Months

Before discussing the personnel budgets and personnel forms, the webinar focused on the calculation of person months, which is how all Senior Personnel, including the PI, Co-PIs, and Other Senior Personnel, must report their time commitments. The examples below explain how person months are calculated and broken out by academic, summer, or calendar time periods.

Scenario 1

A 12-month employee devotes 10% FTE in each year of the project: 10% of 12 months is 1.2 months.

*Year (YYYY)	*Person Months (##.##)
1. 2026	01.20
2. 2027	01.20
3. 2028	01.20

Scenario 2

A faculty member has one course release time each fall and spring. The normal full-time teaching load is 5 courses: 1/5 (or 20%) of 9 months = 1.8 months.

*Year (YYYY)	*Person Months (##.##)
1. 2026	01.80
2. 2027	01.80
3. 2028	01.80

Scenario 3

A faculty member has a 9-month academic year contract and a separate contract for summer work.

Each Academic Year: 1 day per 5-day week (or 1 course release from a 5-course teaching load) = 1/5 (20%) FTE = 20% of 9 months or 1.8 months.

Each Summer: 2 months full-time grant work = 2.0 months

Total person months: 3.8 (1.8 + 2.0).

*Year (YYYY)	*Person Months (##.##)
1. 2026	03.80
2. 2027	03.80
3. 2028	03.80

Scenario 4

A faculty member has a 5-course normal load with 1 course release time fall and spring semesters in years 1-3 and works ½ summer month in years 1-2.

Each Academic Year: 1 day per 5-day week = 1/5 (20%) FTE = 20% of 9 months or 1.8 months.

Two Summers: 0.5 months full-time summer grant work in Years 1 and 2 only.

Total person months: Years 1 and 2 = 2.30; Year 3 = 1.80.

*Year (YYYY)	*Person Months (##.##)
1. 2026	02.30
2. 2027	02.30
3. 2028	01.80

Note that the PAPPG limits allowable time on NSF-funded projects to two months per year. This does NOT apply to ATE projects, but allocation of more time should be carefully justified.


Person months may be reported to two decimal places. Use rounding cautiously to 0.1 or 0.25 increments to avoid odd fractions like 0.17 person months.

It is critical to understand how person months are used and reported across different parts of the submission. Consistency is essential for compliance and for reviewers to properly assess the project's feasibility and staffing. Make certain that you have reported the same person month information in the Budget, the Budget Justification, and the Current and Pending (Other) Support document.

The Mentor-Connect Resource Library has a downloadable Excel spreadsheet that can help you convert time and effort into person months, as shown below. Access it by entering the title in the search engine.

Percent of Time & Effort to Person Months (PM)

Interactive Conversion Table



Enter the % of effort you want to commit to the grant

The person month for 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12 are displayed below.

3 month Summer Term		6 month Appointment		8 month Appointment		9 month Academic Year		10 month Appointment		12 month Calendar Year	
% Effort	Person Month	% Effort	Person Month	% Effort	Person Month	% Effort	Person Month	% Effort	Person Month	% Effort	Person Month
0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00

There are three basic salary (wage) bases: Calendar Year, Academic Year and Summer Term. Here is a month/week/days breakout for each:

Academic Year (AY)	9 months	39 weeks	273 days
Summer Term (SM)	3 months	13 weeks	90 days
Calendar Year (CY)	12 months	52 weeks	365 days

To fill out the budget forms for the SF 424 R&R grantees will need to convert percent-of-effort to person months. Below are two examples of how person months are applied:

Example 1:

A PI on an AY appointment at a salary of \$63,000 will have a monthly salary of \$7,000 (one-ninth of the AY). 25% of AY effort would equate to 2.25 person months ($9 \times .25 = 2.25$). The Budget figure for that effort would be \$15,750 ($7,000$ multiplied by 2.25 AY months).

Example 2:

A PI on a CY appointment at a salary of \$72,000 will have a monthly salary of \$6,000 (one-twelfth of total CY salary). 25% of CY effort would equate to 3 CY months ($12 \times .25 = 3$). The budget figure for that effort would be \$18,000 ($6,000$ multiplied by 3 CY months).