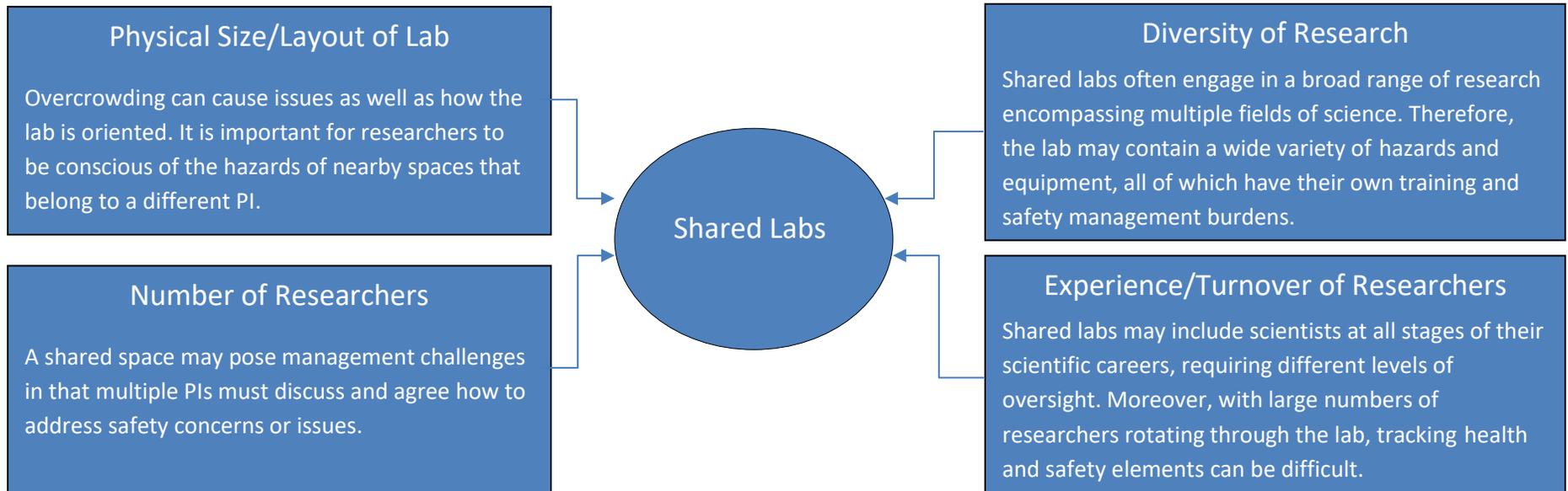


Managing Shared Laboratory Spaces – Guidance for Principle Investigators

Factors Affecting Shared Laboratories



Challenges

Common challenges encountered by large labs and shared spaces can include:

- lack of individual accountability
- poor general housekeeping
- lack of mechanisms for resolving EH&S matters
- hazardous materials and waste which are not properly labeled, stored or disposed of
- training maintenance and documentation
- hazard communication amongst labs

Management Strategies for Principle Investigators

Empower Employees/ Delegate

- EHS suggests increasing the frequency of self-assessments to monthly for shared labs. Each month, assign a different employee to conduct a safety walkthrough in their lab area and nearby lab areas. This allows employees to feel like they have an active part in their own safety and their fellow colleagues' safety.
- It is important that your employees feel empowered to say something if they see unsafe lab behavior.
- Remind employees that what they do at their lab bench also effects employees of other lab benches or employees just walking through.

Establish Housekeeping Guidelines

- Work with the other PIs in your area to conduct frequent lab clean-ups.
- Accountability can be difficult in shared lab spaces. Establish labeling procedures such as color coding hazardous materials or equipment (i.e. colored stickers or tape) so nearby groups know immediately who owns what. This could help prevent hard feelings if materials are mistaken for someone else's'.
- Create an expectation that if a chemical is not labeled correctly, they have 5-working days to fix it before it will be removed as hazardous waste.

Demonstrate a Commitment to Safety

- Conduct quarterly meetings for all PIs and/or lab managers in the shared space. Topics to discuss include standardizing safety expectations, hazard/research discussions, and issues arising in the lab that need to be addressed.
- What occurs on one lab bench can affect employees from another group; stress the importance of safety to employees during lab meetings and do walk-throughs to enforce rules.

Consistent Onboarding/Training

- Make a commitment to ensure employees have completed OSU's Lab Safety Training Program prior to beginning work in the lab. This will eliminate any concern from other PIs regarding the status of an employee's training.
- Utilize the "Shared Lab Space Guidelines" document, or something similar, to describe any lab rules or expectations that are stricter than the standard EHS requirements (e.g. color coded labeling, etc.).

Equipment Sharing Expectations

- Designate a competent individual who will be main person training and maintaining the equipment. This person should be the one documenting training and ensuring there is an SOP available. For example, many autoclaves are shared but often times individuals are not sure who the trainer is or who to contact if there is an issue with the autoclave.
- Posting SOPs and a "trained individual list" next to the equipment can act as a reminder for new employees that they must go through training before operating the equipment.