
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR ELIGIBILITY

PURPOSE: When Boise State University submits a proposal to an external sponsor and subsequently accepts an award to support a project, the university assumes significant financial and legal obligations because the formal award is made in the name of the university. Under the general oversight and authority of the university, the principal investigator (also project administrator, project director, program administrator, and program director) of a sponsored project is the individual who bears primary responsibility for completion and technical compliance of the proposed scope of work, fiscal stewardship of the sponsor funds, and fulfillment of the administrative requirements of the project. Thus, the university must ensure that individuals serving in the capacity of principal investigator have appropriate technical competence and administrative capabilities, and have a reasonable long-term commitment to the university. This policy defines the requirements that must be met by those who serve in the capacity of principal investigator on externally sponsored projects at Boise State University.

I. DEFINITIONS

Principal Investigator – A principal investigator is a university employee with an eligible appointment (see section III below for eligible appointments) who is responsible for the design, scientific/technical/administrative conduct, and reporting of a research, training, or service project supported by extramural funding sources. A principal investigator must personally participate in the project to a significant degree.

Project Administrator or Project Director – A project administrator or project director is a university employee with an eligible appointment (see section III below for eligible appointments) who is the head of a training or service project and has the same responsibilities as a principal investigator.

Program Administrator or Program Director – A program administrator or program director is a university employee with an eligible appointment (see section III below for eligible appointments) who is the head of a program involving more than one project and is administratively responsible for all aspects of the program.

Co-Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator – The designations co-investigator and co-principal investigator are synonymous and refer to a university employee with an eligible appointment (see section III below for eligible appointments) who is responsible for a portion of the design, scientific/technical/administrative conduct, or reporting of a research, training, or service project supported by extramural funding sources.

II. EQUIVALENCE OF TERMINOLOGY

All statements in sections III, IV, V, and VI for a principal investigator also apply to a project administrator, project director, program administrator, and program director. All statements in sections III, IV, V, and VI for a co-investigator also apply to a co-principal investigator since these designations are synonymous.

III. ELIGIBILITY

- A. **Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator:** Any individual who holds one of the following appointments at the university may be a principal investigator or co-investigator for a sponsored project:
- official faculty at the level of assistant, associate, or full professor;
 - administrative faculty member;
 - research or clinical faculty member;
 - director of a formally approved institute or center at the university.

The university recognizes only one individual as the principal investigator on a project except in the situation mentioned in section V below.

- B. **Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator in Special Cases:** The approval of the vice president of research is required in all special cases listed below. The general procedures listed in section IV.A also apply. (Please note that matters of national security, export control, or immigration status may affect approval of requests for visiting faculty and visiting scholars.)

The chief administrator of a unit (e.g., department chair or unit director) and the next higher-level administrator (e.g., dean) can jointly recommend that an individual who holds one of the following appointments be permitted to serve as a principal investigator or co-investigator:

- visiting faculty member;
 - visiting scholar;
 - member of the professional staff (the position description must be consistent with leadership of sponsored projects).
 - official faculty below the level of assistant professor;
 - adjunct/affiliate faculty member;
 - emeritus faculty member;
- C. **Students:** A student (undergraduate or graduate) cannot, in general, be a principal investigator or co-investigator on a sponsored project; see section IV.B for exceptions.
- D. **Exceptions:** The Vice President for Research may grant exceptions under extraordinary conditions to individuals that do not fall under one of the appointments listed above.

IV. GENERAL PROCEDURE FOR EXCEPTIONS

- A. **Individuals Other Than Students:** If the chief administrator of a unit (e.g., department chair or unit director) and the next higher-level administrator (e.g., dean) are confident in the abilities of an individual other than a student to serve as a principal investigator or co-investigator, those administrators may request, in writing to the vice president of research, a deviation from policy. A request of this type must contain a statement by the administrators that they will assume full responsibility for

the actions of that individual in their capacity as a principal investigator. A separate request for an exception to principal investigator status must be processed for each proposal, unless a blanket exception is granted.

- B. **Students:** A student who also holds an appropriate non-student appointment at the university, and has written authorization from a committee composed of the vice president of research, the dean of the college responsible for the program, and the dean of the graduate college (in the case of a graduate student), may be a principal investigator or co-investigator on a project. Such written authorization must specify all appropriate conditions and limitations.

V. CONFLICTS WITH SPONSORS

In some cases, a sponsoring agency may have more stringent restrictions on the qualifications for the principal investigator on a particular project than are mandated by university policy. In this situation, the sponsor's restrictions will take precedence over the policies of the university for that particular project. In the situation where a sponsor may require or expect an individual to serve as a principal investigator but that individual is ineligible under this policy, then the individual must have a person who is eligible to be a principal investigator serve as a co-principal investigator for internal purposes and assume responsibility for compliance with sponsor and institutional requirements. Fellowships or other training awards are examples where sponsor and institutional requirements may conflict.

VI. REMOVAL OF A PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR OR CO-INVESTIGATOR

Any person who is serving in the capacity of principal investigator or co-investigator may be removed at any time from this role by the dean(s) of the college(s) involved if that person fails to properly execute his or her duties with respect to the project or program. Prior to the removal, the principal investigator or co-investigator shall be given written notice of the intent to take such action. That notice shall include an explanation of the basis for the proposed action. The principal investigator or co-investigator shall be given at least five (5) working days from receipt of notice of the proposed action to respond and reach a satisfactory resolution with the dean(s). If the principal investigator or co-investigator fails to reach a satisfactory resolution with the dean(s), the principal investigator or co-investigator may request (within five (5) working days) that his or her proposed removal be reviewed by the Faculty Research Advisory Committee. This committee will investigate the matter and provide its recommendation to the president within thirty (30) calendar days after receiving the request for a review. The president shall render a decision on removal of the principal investigator or co-investigator within five (5) working days after receiving the recommendation of the committee.