

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR POLICY

Category: Sponsored Programs / Research Administration

Policy Number: [To be assigned]

Policy Manager: Office of Sponsored Research and Programs

Current Revision Approval Date: [To be entered by OIIC]

Next Review Date: [To be entered by OIIC]

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to the University community on who is eligible to serve as a Principal Investigator (PI) or Project Director on sponsored projects at Virginia State University.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This policy applies to faculty, researchers, administrators, and other individuals involved in the development and administration of externally funded sponsored programs.

AUTHORITY

This policy is issued under the authority of the Division of Research and Economic Development and aligns with the responsibilities established by the Chief Research Officer.

DEFINITIONS

- **Co-Investigator:** A key contributor to the project who does not carry administrative or compliance oversight responsibilities. This individual does not need to meet PI eligibility standards.
- **Co-Principal Investigator:** An individual who shares responsibility for the project with the PI and meets the same eligibility criteria.
- **Principal Investigator (PI):** The individual responsible for the intellectual and administrative conduct of the project, including fiscal accountability and compliance with applicable policies and regulations. Multiple individuals may serve as PIs, each sharing full responsibility.
- **Project Director:** A designation equivalent to Principal Investigator, used more commonly for non-research or programmatic sponsored activities.
- **Sponsored Project/Program/Activity:** Any externally funded research, training, evaluative testing, or public service project directed by faculty or staff that requires the university to perform a specified program or deliver a specific outcome.

POLICY STATEMENT

Individuals with the following academic titles and who hold full-time, salaried positions at VSU are automatically eligible to serve as a PI or Project Director:

- Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor
- Research Professor, Research Associate Professor, Research Assistant Professor

Administrative personnel with the following titles may serve as PI for projects directly related to the mission of their office:

- Director, Associate Director, Assistant Director

Individuals who do not meet the above criteria may serve as Co-Investigator with an eligible PI, or may serve as PI with prior written approval from the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.

Trainees as PIs

Postdoctoral researchers and students are not eligible to serve as PIs except when required by the

sponsor and when a qualified faculty mentor is named to oversee the project. In such cases, prior written approval must be obtained from the Dean of the relevant college.

REQUESTING PI STATUS

Individuals who are not automatically eligible may request PI status by submitting the following materials to the Chief Research Officer no less than 30 days before the sponsor's proposal submission deadline:

1. A letter from the applicant's Dean, Chair, or Director requesting PI approval. The letter should include a brief description of the proposed project and a rationale for the individual's suitability to serve as PI.
2. A current copy of the candidate's CV.

The Chief Research Officer will review the request and notify the applicant and their academic unit of the decision no later than five business days before the proposal submission deadline.

RELATED PROCEDURES

RELATED MATERIALS/REFERENCES

VSU Office of Sponsored Research and Programs
Federal sponsor-specific PI eligibility guidelines