

Principal Investigator Eligibility Guidelines

Projects involving sponsored funding, human research, animal research, or research involving biohazards or radiation are subject to federal, state, and/or local regulatory oversight. This oversight is designed to assure the responsible management of project funds and the safe conduct of research.

The right to lead projects rests with Principal Investigators (PIs), individuals who by their educational backgrounds, work experiences and position responsibilities have demonstrated the project management skills needed to assure compliance with applicable regulations.

Eligibility to serve as a PI for sponsored funding administered through Iowa State University (including some competitive internal funding) and projects that require approval by a compliance committee depends on an individual's position classification. The following section summarizes PI eligibility at Iowa State University. Note that sponsors may impose stricter regulations. Colleges, centers, institutes, or departments also may enact stricter regulations. For all position classifications, maintenance of the right to serve as PI is contingent upon responsible performance of duties as PI. Projects administered through the Ames Laboratory follow policies set by the Ames Laboratory.

PI Eligibility for Various Position Classifications

Tenured, Tenure-Eligible, and Research Track Faculty (Category 1)

Tenured, tenure-eligible, and non-tenure research faculty are automatically eligible to serve as PIs on sponsored projects and compliance protocols at the time of hire. Such individuals generally have terminal degrees in their field and, by virtue of their training and qualifications at the time of hire, generally have the relevant project management skills.

Professional and Scientific (P&S) – (Category 2)

Some P&S job profiles are automatically eligible to serve as PIs on sponsored projects and compliance protocols at the time of hire, provided they meet sponsor requirements. Click [here](#) for a list of eligible job profiles.

Term Faculty (Clinical Track, Teaching Track, Practice Track, Adjunct, and Lecturers)

Clinical track, teaching track, practice track, and adjunct term faculty with the rank of associate professor or professor are automatically eligible to serve as PIs on sponsored projects and compliance protocols. Assistant professors with a Ph.D. or DVM in these tracks may serve as PIs on sponsored projects and compliance protocols. Lecturers with a Ph.D. or DVM may serve as PIs on compliance protocols. Lecturers who are required as part of their position responsibilities to use animals in teaching may serve as PIs on IACUC teaching protocols. All projects must be performed within the investigator's term appointment period.

Affiliate Faculty

Affiliate appointments are unpaid, usually part-time appointments granted to persons who are typically employed elsewhere and who provide academic service to the university in furtherance of the research or graduate education mission of the university. In some instances, the affiliate appointment formally recognizes services provided to the university as per a cooperative agreement with another governmental agency (e.g., USDA).

- Affiliate faculty who are federal employees are automatically eligible to serve as PIs on sponsored projects and compliance protocols if permitted to do so by their employer. Note that, according to federal policy, USDA affiliates cannot serve as ISU PIs or ISU Co-PIs on proposals or awards. USDA ARS affiliates interested in serving as an ARS Co-PI on an ISU proposal should contact their ARS Administrative Officer for further information and authorization.
- Affiliate faculty granted the status following a resignation from a tenured/tenure-eligible position at ISU are automatically eligible to serve as co-PI on existing awards and compliance protocols only if having served as PI or co-PI while formerly employed at ISU.

Visiting Faculty

Visiting faculty may serve as PIs on sponsored projects and compliance protocols if (1) a Category 1 or Category 2 employee serves as co-PI, and (2) the PI's unit chair or director agrees by signing the ISU proposal data form (GoldSheet) to meet the contractual obligations of the award should the PI not perform as required. This includes the timely provision of all required deliverables and reports, payment of unallowable costs, reimbursement of the funding agency for work not completed, etc. The right to serve as PI is contingent on responsible performance in grants management. All projects must be performed within the visitor's term appointment period at Iowa State.

Emeritus Faculty

Retired faculty who previously served as PIs and who are awarded emeritus status may continue to serve as PIs on existing sponsored projects and compliance protocols, and they are automatically eligible to serve as co-PIs on new sponsored projects or compliance protocols. The use of university resources, such as space, equipment, etc., by emeritus faculty requires the approval of the department chair.

Postdoctoral Associates

Postdoctoral associates may serve as PIs on sponsored projects and compliance protocols if a Category 1 or Category 2 employee serves as co-PI.

Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Undergraduate and graduate students may serve as PIs on compliance protocols for the Institutional Review Board if a Category 1 or Category 2 employee serves as co-PI. Undergraduate and graduate students may also serve as co-PIs on sponsored projects if a Category 1 or Category 2 employee serves as PI.

Co-Investigators

All ISU faculty and staff are eligible to serve as co-PIs on sponsored projects.

PI Waivers

Individuals not eligible to serve as a PI per the above criteria may request a waiver to serve as PI. A request, with the required approval of a supervisor, should be submitted [here](#).

- *Waiver to Serve as PI on Proposals and Awards.* The request should include (1) a CV, and (2) a cover letter describing evidence of prior successful independent scholarship, such as a Ph.D. or M.S. with an extensive record of independent research, and evidence of prior successful grants management, such as service as a Co-PI, and (3) documented approval from requestor's supervisor.
- *Waiver to Serve as PI on Compliance Protocols.* The request should include (1) a CV, and (2) a cover letter describing evidence of prior successful independent scholarship in an area relevant to the compliance area, and (3) documented approval from requestor's supervisor.

PI Status for Dissertation Research Awards

In rare circumstances, it may be appropriate for an individual who is not eligible to serve as a PI for ISU purposes to serve as a PI on an external proposal. An example would be an individual applying for a dissertation research award. In these cases, the individual should be shown as a Co-PI on the Proposal Data Form (GoldSheet), and the individual's supervisor or department chair should be shown as the PI on the GoldSheet. The GoldSheet is an internal document that does not leave Iowa State. Any Co-PI shown on the GoldSheet is given credit for the proposal and/or subsequent award in the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration database.

Further Information

Questions regarding eligibility to serve as PI should be directed to [Jerry Zamzow](#) in the Office of the Vice President for Research, 2810 Beardshear Hall, Ames, IA, 50011 (jzamzow@iastate.edu).