

Principal Investigators

The full administrative, fiscal, and scientific responsibility for the management of a sponsored project resides with the principal investigator named in the award. A principal investigator is required to:

- assume overall responsibility for the management of the project;
- determine project feasibility;
- ensure that all of the information in the funding proposal is presented in a manner that is complete, accurate, and developed according to the practices commonly accepted within the relevant academic community;
- ensure that all required approvals are obtained and University forms and certifications are completed in a timely manner;
- know and abide by the terms and conditions of the award;
- conduct the work on the project according to the research protocol or statement of work that was submitted with the original proposal or as subsequently modified by the sponsor in agreement with the principal investigator and the University;
- ensure that all work meets the highest ethical standards and is conducted in accordance with the University's conflict of interest policies;
- ensure that all work performed is conducted in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations and with University policies and requirements;
- ensure that all key personnel are qualified and have met the necessary training requirements;
- manage the project's budget so that funds are spent correctly, taking into account any restrictions imposed by the sponsor, and avoid cost overruns;
- ensure that all financial records and reports are accurate and auditable;
- monitor the activities of subrecipients, if any;
- submit reports on the research in a timely manner, according to the sponsor's requirements; and
- complete the formal closeout of the project.

The University recognizes that in some cases principal investigators may delegate these duties to administrative personnel, but they retain overall responsibility for the financial and administrative management of their sponsored projects.

Questions concerning the duties of a principal investigator should be directed to SPA or to Sponsored Projects Finance in the Office of the Controller. Information on financial management of sponsored awards is also available in the [Research Handbooks](#) and through [Columbia Finance](#).

The principal investigator normally must be an officer of instruction with a full-time appointment in the rank of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or instructor (a limited term appointment for a maximum of two years when someone has been offered a position as an assistant professor, but has not completed the educational requirements before assuming the appointment), or a senior research scholar/scientist or research scholar/scientist. Faculty or officers of research holding other titles, including those in a visiting or adjunct grade, may act as co-principal investigators with faculty in one of the ranks mentioned above. However, they may not serve as the sole principal investigator without the approval of the appropriate chair and dean or executive vice president and the Provost. The Provost has delegated the authority to make such exceptions for faculty holding appointments at the Columbia University Irving Medical Center to the Executive Vice President for Health and Biomedical Sciences and for faculty holding appointments elsewhere to the Executive Vice President for Research, and for officers of research holding appointments at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory to the Director.

Exceptions are granted only on a project-by-project basis, or in certain unusual cases, for a limited time period. Officers seeking an exception should submit a letter signed by the appropriate chair and dean or executive vice president addressed to the Provost or to one of the officers listed in the previous paragraph. The letter must include an acknowledgement that the applicable department, school, institute, or center has financial, managerial, and programmatic responsibility for the project and confirmation that appropriate non-sponsored support will be provided to cover proposal writing and other non-

sponsored activities of the investigator for whom the exception is sought. The investigator's *curriculum vitae* and an abstract of the project covered by the exception should accompany the letter.

For non-sponsored research studies involving human subjects or vertebrate animals, a similar waiver request must be submitted to the Human Research Protection Office or to the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee if the principal investigator does not meet the qualifications outlined above.

A faculty member or officer of research who is a principal investigator may continue in that capacity after retirement until the expiration of the current term of funding of the sponsored project. The officer may serve as a principal investigator beyond that date only with the special permission of the appropriate designee of the Provost.

Faculty or officers of research serving as principal investigators may not prepare or submit proposals for outside funding through another institution without first obtaining permission from the applicable chair, dean or executive vice president, and Executive Vice President for Research. Requests for exceptions should be directed to Sponsored Projects Administration. They are normally granted only in the case of collaborative projects where it is determined that Columbia should not administer the award.