

Principal investigator

principal investigator (PI) *n* - [research] 1. The person having responsibility for conduct of the research proposed in a **grant application** submitted to the **National Institutes of Health**; such a person in any **funding application** submitted to the NIH, whether for **grant** or **contract** funding; such a person named on any **funding proposal**, regardless of funding source. 2. The person in charge of a **research project**; the lead scientist on a **research project**. 3. The head of a **center** in a **multicenter study**. 4. The **chair** of a **multicenter study**. 5. The head of a **clinical center** in a **multicenter trial** rt: **co-principal investigator** *Usage note*: The term serves both as an administrative (defn 1) and leadership label (defn 2). It is a mistake to assume that an administrative role translates automatically into to a leadership role, though often the person named in the sense of defn 1 is the same person named or implied in the sense of defn 2 in the case of most investigator-initiated **single-center** research projects. Avoid use of the term, or its abbreviation, PI, as a leadership label in any single-center setting where more than one person is being referenced. Avoid in the sense of defn 2 in settings having multiple “principal investigators”; use **center director** and **chair of study** to designate positions of leadership in **multicenter** settings. Avoid uses in the sense of defn 5 since those uses carry subtle connotations that those heading **resource centers** are not as “principal” to the overall effort as their clinical counterparts. See also usage notes for **co-principal investigator**, **investigator**, and **center**.