Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D)
Multiple Principal Investigator (MPI) Eligibility Policy
Originally Implemented February 2008
__Updated June 2012__

Purpose

- This HSR&D Multiple Principal Investigator (MPI) policy:
    - Recognizes that research projects can be particularly complex, requiring substantial levels of commitment by investigators with distinct knowledge, skills, and experience;
    - Encourages investigator collaboration that importantly strengthens the conduct of research and substantially improves the likelihood of project success;
    - Assigns a title to investigators appropriate to time allocation and responsibilities;
    - Encourages medical center leadership to provide the protected time necessary to perform the research; and
    - Supports investigator academic recognition and advancement.
- The MPI policy defines the eligibility criteria designed to appropriately designate multiple individuals as PIs on a single research project, and who share the authority and responsibility for leading and directing project activities, intellectually and logistically. Accepted Principal Investigators (PI) will be responsible and accountable to HSR&D and VHA for the proper conduct of the approved project, including the submission of all required reports. The approval of more than one identified PI on a project application does not diminish the accountability of any individual PI to HSR&D and VA. Each PI must demonstrate the appropriate level of authority and responsibility to direct the project supported by research funding to be considered a PI. The following policy details describe criteria and procedures to apply for MPI status on a single research effort.

Policy

- Criteria for identifying more than one investigator as PI on a single research application include: the contribution of critically important, well defined, non-overlapping intellectual skills; distinct project responsibilities and substantial percent effort; and the needs of the research team and project (for example, size, location, disciplines, and structure of the research team, and/or the interdisciplinary nature of the project). One PI on a MPI application shall be designated the Corresponding PI.
- The Director, HSR&D (in collaboration with the Director of another ORD Service, if the project involves more than one Service) will approve / disapprove the MPI application, with the advice of the study's peer review committee. The request for MPI status will be considered during the peer review process for the project itself, and administratively by ORD staff and the Director(s). This will only be addressed for those applications that attain a fundable review score.

General Administrative Issues

- This revised MPI policy applies only to newly submitted, merit reviewed Investigator Initiated Research (IIR), Service Directed Research (SDR) and QUERI Service Directed Projects (SDP) at single or multi-site locations.
- Each PI of a MPI project must meet VA eligibility criteria according to requirements in VHA Handbook 1200.15, HSR&D Handbook 1204.1 and merit proposal application instructions at: http://www.research.va.gov/resources/policies/by_number.cfm and http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/funding/default.cfm (*see How to Apply*)

- MPI projects must be submitted through NIH eRA grants.gov, prepared according to the instructions at http://vaww.research.va.gov/funding/docs/VA-SF424_RR_Guide.doc.
- The Corresponding PI will change only upon submission and approval of a Project Modification.

Multiple-PI Leadership Plan

A Leadership Plan must be included in a MPI application. The rationale for choosing an MPI approach must be described. The governance and organizational structure of the leadership team and the research project should be described, including communication plans, process for making decisions on scientific direction, and procedures for resolving conflicts. The roles and administrative, technical, and scientific responsibilities for the project or program should be delineated for each of the PIs and other collaborators. The Corresponding PI: is responsible for communicating with HSR&D staff about project-related scientific, administrative, and ethical issues; is the point of contact for communications from VACO; and is responsible for disseminating communications from VACO to the other PI(s) and project staff.

It is not appropriate for individuals who would normally be listed as co-investigators to be elevated to PI status. The multiple-PI option is reserved for team science efforts, explained and justified in the Leadership Plan in the application in a clear and convincing manner. (HSR&D does not recognize the "co-PI" designation.) HSR&D does not intend or expect co-investigators to be routinely elevated to PI status. Each PI must have a defined role on the project and must provide a convincing case that he/she will function as a part of the leadership team. PIs must share responsibility for the scientific and technical direction of the project as a whole, and remain accountable for the proper conduct of the project or activity. Serving as a site PI on a multi-site project is not in itself sufficient justification for being considered under a multiple PI arrangement, but it could be a factor if that person also brings unique and essential skills to the project (for example, designing and overseeing analysis for a major component of the study) and has a substantial role in conception and design for the overall project.

Sample MPI Table that Summarizes PI Responsibilities:

Tabular Summary of Distinguishing and Shared PI Responsibilities					
MPI Name & Degree[1]	Location-Station #	FTEE on Project	Distinguishing Responsibilities	Shared Responsibilities	Other Comments
[MPI #1] *					
[MPI #2]					

* Indicates the Corresponding PI

MPI Organizational Chart

HSR&D

ACOS R&D Location #1

ACOS R&D Location #2

Multiple PI #1 (corresponding PI)

Multiple PI #2

Distinguishing Responsibilities (e.g., Statistical Analyses)

Shared Responsibilities

Distinguishing Responsibilities (e.g., Questionnaiire Development and Administration)

Co-Investigators and Project Staff

Project Consultants

Co-Investigators and Project Staff