



Entrepreneurial
Training & Consulting

Are you qualified to be a Principal Investigator?

Early-stage companies are often started by one or two people—and neither may have the right qualifications to be a Principal Investigator. But what kind of credentials are required by agency reviewers? What do you need to know before you submit your proposal?

First, let's define what the role is expected to do. A Principal Investigator oversees—and sometimes participates in, all research for the company. This person must have the right technical expertise to conduct or supervise the research.

Businesses often begin with someone who has an MBA or a marketing background, neither of which is qualified to be a PI. And remember, an SBIR or STTR grant is principally a grant to accomplish the research necessary to move the company forward.

Even though there are no specific rules barring anyone from serving as the PI, unqualified candidates may cause the proposal to not be reviewed well and that may damage your chances for receiving a grant.

Although the participating agencies have varied qualification requirements to be a Principal Investigator, there are two primary rules:

1. SBIR —PI must be employed at the company most of the time
2. STTR — PI can be employed by the company or a university

Reviewers at the various agencies are looking for expertise. They want someone with credentials to manage the research. After all, the Principal Investigator will be the focus of any review. In other words, the single most critiqued member of the company.

So, after you've decided which agency makes the most sense for your innovation, go to their web site and check on what they expect from a PI. [BBCetc](#) can help you choose the right agency for your idea and help guide you through the process, including how to select the right Principal Investigator.