



PATIENT-CENTERED OUTCOMES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Intermediate Funders to Provide Operational, Programmatic, and Fiscal Agent Services to Pipeline to Proposal Tier I Awardees

REQUEST FOR QUOTES

RFQ # PCO-ENGAWD2013

KEY DATES	
ACTION	DATE
RFQ Released	June 17, 2013
Deadline for RFQ Questions	July 8, 2013
Deadline for Proposals	July 15, 2013
Projected Award Date	August 15, 2013
Projected Start Date	September 15, 2013



About PCORI

PCORI was authorized by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 as a non-profit, nongovernmental organization and is charged with helping patients, clinicians, purchasers, and policy makers make better-informed health decisions by “advancing the quality and relevance of evidence about how to prevent, diagnose, treat, monitor, and manage diseases, disorders, and other health conditions.” It does this by producing and promoting high-integrity, evidence-based information that comes from research guided by patients, caregivers, and the broader healthcare community.

PCORI’s strong patient-centered orientation directs attention to individual and system differences that may influence research strategies and outcomes. PCORI is charged with producing useful, relevant clinical evidence through the support of new research and the analysis and synthesis of existing research.

PCORI is committed to transparency and a rigorous stakeholder-driven process that emphasizes patient engagement. PCORI uses a variety of forums and public comment periods to obtain public input to enhance its work.

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Opportunity Snapshot

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) was created to conduct research to provide information about the best available evidence to help patients, those who care for them, payers, policy makers, and others make better informed decisions. PCORI's research is intended to give patients and their caregivers a better understanding of the prevention, treatment, and care options available and the science that supports those options.

Purpose

PCORI's Pipeline to Proposal Awards (also called Pipeline Awards), a progressive, three-tiered funding approach, aims to accelerate research proposal submission and dissemination and to develop a nationwide foundation of patients, stakeholders, and researchers equipped and eager to participate in patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR). This request for quotes supports Pipeline to Proposal Tier I Pipeline Awards only. For more information about the Pipeline to Proposal Awards and Tier I Pipeline Awards, [please see this overview](#).¹

Because PCORI has a limited headquarters workforce, the operational, programmatic, and fiscal duties associated with Tier I Pipeline Awards will be subcontracted to at least five intermediate health and healthcare entities with significant research capacity building and award management experience (e.g., grant and contract award administration).

Role of the Intermediate Funders

The purpose of working through five Intermediate Funders (IFs) to execute and manage the Tier I Pipeline Awards is to:

- Tap into the knowledge and expansive networks of organizations experienced in local, regional, or national health advocacy and research to serve as IFs.
- Extend the reach of PCOR across the country by identifying IFs across four distinct geographic areas (South, West, Midwest, and Northeast).
- Explore and evaluate different mechanisms for management of small awards through the styles of the selected IFs.

¹ Available at pcori.org/assets/2013/06/PCORI-Overview-Pipeline-To-Proposal-Awards-061713.pdf



- Build upon the existing dissemination and communication frameworks available through the IFs to quickly share results of this work and expand interest and involvement in PCOR.

These IFs, who are well versed in PCORI practices and the principles of patient-centered research, will manage up to 10 Tier I Pipeline Awards to patients, stakeholders, researchers, or their respective organizations, in partnership with PCORI. Note that the actual number of awards may vary per region and per funding cycle.

This RFQ solicits quotes for two administrative functions in support of Tier I Pipeline Awards, Function 1: Operational and Programmatic Services, and Function 2: Fiscal Agent Services.

- **Function 1: Operational and Programmatic Services in Support of Tier I Pipeline Awards.** PCORI is seeking five IFs with experience in grants or contract management in areas such as health advocacy, community development, community-based participatory research, or patient-centered outcomes research with activated patients, stakeholders, researchers, or their respective organizations. Each IF will, in partnership with PCORI, manage up to 10 Tier I Pipeline Awards issued through a competitive process to recipients interested in participating in PCOR, partnership development, and community building with the end goal of identifying health and healthcare research topics important to patients. Each IF will provide training, contract administration, and any other technical assistance as described in the Operational and Programmatic Services Scope of Work.
- **Function 2: Fiscal Agent Services in Support of Tier I Pipeline Awards.** Each IF must be able to perform post-award contract administration, accounting, and fiscal agent services described the Fiscal Agent Services Scope of Work.

This RFQ cannot be bifurcated; the successful IF will have the capacity and requisite technical acumen to perform both functions. Proposals received in response to this RFQ that do not address both functions will be deemed nonresponsive.

The IFs solicited with this RFQ are intended to serve as portfolio managers, supporters of programmatic work, and fiscal agents. PCORI seeks organizations that have demonstrated experience in grants or contract management in areas such as health advocacy, community development, community-based participatory research, or patient-centered outcomes research, as well as ties to their communities and interactions with patients and stakeholders at the grassroots level and with organizations with reach into the patient and stakeholder community at the national level. They will perform operational report management and provide deliverables to



PCORI. This reporting will help to ensure that PCORI monitors Tier I awardee engagement activities.

In addition, the IFs will serve as fiscal agents who tie project activities, deliverables, and milestones to expenditures. In an organized fashion, the IF must provide at least monthly reports to PCORI that detail awardee progress, results, and associated expenditures. The IF will monitor expenditures and perform procurement services, when necessary. IFs will issue payments for awardee expenditures and perform roll-up accounting for PCORI at the close of each month (typically within five to seven days of month's end). This will facilitate timely recognition of expenditures by PCORI.

The IFs will work in partnership with PCORI to manage both the operational and programmatic and fiscal services outlined in this RFQ. Each of the IFs will have extensive experience managing small awards to recipients with little funding experience. Each of the five IFs may manage the awards in slightly different ways, and PCORI welcomes applicants to describe how the successful funding models they have employed in the past will allow them to successfully execute up to 10 Tier I Pipeline Awards. However, PCORI operates by strict standards and rules, which are described in more detail in the fiscal services portion of this document.

On the operational and programmatic side, PCORI will similarly draw from the experiences of our selected IFs, but it is critical that the core principles of PCOR and overarching goals of the Pipeline Awards are adhered to by Tier I awardees. In order to strike that balance between partnership and oversight, PCORI will rely on the IFs to execute all elements of technical support for the Tier I awardees, but following the guidelines set forth by us. Again, we assume that selected IFs will have ample experience assisting awardees in developing community, creating infrastructure, and strategic planning, and we invite applicants to propose how they would employ their successful community capacity building models to execute these awards, in accordance with the guidelines, expectations, and criteria for Tier I success set forth by PCORI. IFs will be asked to provide input on the selection of the Tier I awardees, though PCORI will have the final authority in making the award selections.

Funds Available, Budget, and Project Periods

PCORI expects to award up to **a total of \$1.2 million dollars in 2013** to fund up to 50 Tier I Pipeline Awards through five IFs.

IFs will be awarded up to \$150,000 per project period that will, in turn, be distributed to up to 10 Tier I awardees, as well as an appropriate amount of additional funding to cover administrative costs. While cost proposal options remain flexible, an IF may choose to use a fee basis. The fee is calculated on a sliding scale based on the size of the project portfolio. PCORI welcomes cost proposals that charge a fixed fee using a



graduated scale such that the fee percentage decreases as the total portfolio dollar volume increases.

Organizational Eligibility

Qualified applicants for the role of IFs include:

- Public or private health or healthcare entities, either for-profit or non-profit, with experience in grants or contract management in areas such as health advocacy, community development, community-based participatory research, or patient-centered outcomes research.
- Health and healthcare entities with significant experience in providing training, technical assistance, and capacity building to patients, stakeholders, researchers, or their respective organizations with a wide range of skill and experience.
- Health and healthcare entities located within one of four geographic areas in the United States (South, West, Midwest, or Northeast), or be a nationally representative organization with connection to e-communities or communities with a national scope.
- Health and healthcare entities with experience across a diverse set of groups and whose experience is not limited to a specific disease type, one specific demographic group, or one type of stakeholder or researcher.

Only U.S. organizations can apply, and all applicant organizations must be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service.

Period of Performance

The expected period of performance is from date of award for no more than a one-year project period. The cost proposal should support the full 12 months of engagement.

Place of Performance

The IF is required to provide its own facility for the services required hereunder. This function shall be staffed by the IF's personnel and located at its offices.

Hours of Service

It is expected that the IF will be available for project support, Monday through Friday, between 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. (Eastern Time). PCORI has regular observance of federal holidays: New Year's Day; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Thanksgiving Day; and Christmas Day.



Type of Contract

It is expected that the contract executed will be firm fixed price (FFP) with fully justified direct and indirect costs. A typical contract would be based on a percentage fee scale that decreases as the magnitude of the portfolio increases. However, if IFs propose a Time and Materials budget (specific salary rates are proposed), then the Cost Proposal must include résumés, CVs, and other support documentation for the rates requested for key personnel and subcontractors. Likewise, all indirect rates and fees must be fully disclosed and supported with either government-issued documents (Indirect Cost Rate Agreements or Facilities and Administrative Rate Agreements) or independently audited financial statements. This approach encourages IFs to propose innovative costing approaches that may include fixed monthly fees or a service fee (percentage).

Please refer to the Cost Proposal section in [Step 3](#) (page 16) for additional details. Specific terms and conditions will be provided to the winning IFs and follow PCORI's standard contracting format. All IFs are required to execute Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) and Conflict of Interest (COI) forms prior to final contract execution.

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Overview—PCORI Five-Step Process



Step 1. Review the Program Detail

Review the Scope of Work for Function 1 and Function 2.

Step 2. Consider the Requirements

Consider the organization eligibility requirements and PCORI's specific requirements of both Function 1 and Function 2 to see if your organization, your interests, and your capabilities fit this program.

Step 3. Develop Your Solution

Design your response to accomplish the Scope of Work for Function 1 and Function 2, satisfy the expected deliverables on time, and provide services that demonstrate cost efficiency and ingenuity. Be sure to include a cost proposal that is clear and concise, along with justification for all direct and indirect costs.

Step 4. Know the Review Criteria

Understand PCORI's evaluation factors and how they are weighted.

Step 5. Submit Your Proposal

Compile and submit your proposal to include Volume I: Technical Proposal and Volume II: Cost Proposal, in addition to other materials and supporting documentation. All proposals must be submitted no later than 5 p.m. ET on July 15, 2013.



Step 1: Review the Program Detail

Function 1: Operational and Programmatic Services

Scope of Work

PCORI seeks five Intermediate Funders (IFs) from four distinct geographic regions around the country (South, West, Midwest, and Northeast) and one focused on communities that are national in scope, including e-communities, where relevant. Working with these IFs, PCORI can significantly expand the use of patient-centered outcomes research, patient engagement in research, and patient-centered evaluation of research, on the local level as well as the national level.

In partnership with PCORI, the IFs will manage up to 10 Tier I Pipeline Awards, issued through a competitive process. They will also provide training, contract administration, and any other technical assistance needs of the awardees.

The requirements of all IFs include but are not limited to:

- Participate in in-person training about PCORI's funding mechanisms and research processes.
- Work with PCORI to provide Tier I applicant training to their communities. PCORI training modules will be provided to IFs to use.
- Work with PCORI to issue the call for Tier I Pipeline Awards, request and review letters of intent (LOIs) if desired, and review applications as requested with PCORI and according to PCORI review criteria. PCORI will make all final Tier I Pipeline Award decisions.
- Work with PCORI to provide Tier I awardee training. PCORI training modules will be provided to IFs to use.
- Work with PCORI to provide contracts management and technical assistance as needed to all Tier I awardees.
- Engage in routine conversations with assigned PCORI staff to monitor progress of up to 10 Tier I awardees.
- Facilitate the Tier I awardees' engagement in online circles to share findings, engagement models, lessons learned, trainings, and culture change strategies with Tier I awardees *across all five IFs*.
- Collect progress reports from Tier I awardees and submit to PCORI a mid-point progress report and a final report at the end of the funded project that evaluates the success of the partnership, the community engagement process, project implementation, project results, and lessons learned.



- Present summary findings describing the key learning outcomes across the body of up to 10 funded projects at a Tier I awardee meeting in the continental United States. Tier I awardees, as well as IFs, should include these costs in their travel budgets.

Function 2: Fiscal Agent Services

Scope of Work

The IF is expected to develop its own methodology, monitoring processes, policies, and systems for performing the required Scope of Work. IFs must have fully integrated and automated systems for financial oversight, ***not*** spreadsheets. PCORI expects to evaluate innovative solutions that may include web- and cloud-based systems for financial oversight.

The administrative and system setup to support the delivery of fiscal agent services, listed below, represent the post-award functions that PCORI expects the IF to perform under this award.

- a. Prepare Contract Briefs Identifying Key Tier I Pipeline Awards Data**
 - Period of performance (POP).
 - Dollar value of each Tier I Pipeline Award.
 - Deliverables and milestones specified in each award with corresponding due dates.
 - Payment terms with due dates.
 - Budgets (categories to be determined).
 - Tier I awardee Points of Contact (POC), including authorized representatives.
 - POC for PCORI's Program Manager(s).
 - Tier I awardee master file information.
 - Tier I awardee payment information.
- b. Establish Bank Account Protocol and Transfer Process with PCORI**
 - The IF should propose innovative strategies, protocol, and procedures. Options include:
 - Zero-balance accounts.
 - Imprest funds.
 - Wire transfers.
 - The IF will prepare full reconciliations and accounting of all banking activity related to the Tier I Pipeline Awards.

- No comingling of PCORI funds will be permitted.

c. Establish Internal Controls, Procedures, and Report Formats

- The IF will develop a fiscal policy and procedure manual explaining the relevant processes (e.g., purchase order, invoice payment request, etc.) for Tier I awardees. This manual will be subject to review and approval by PCORI Finance and Compliance.
- Develop formats for weekly, monthly, and annual financial and other reports for PCORI, including budget variances, outstanding obligations, bank transaction reports, and notification procedures for project-to-date concerns.
- Develop processes and controls associated with contract administration, contract management, contract accounting, and purchase order/invoice payment requests to cash disbursement processes.
- Provide periodic reports to PCORI, including, but not limited to, contract obligations, contract spend to date, contract commitments, contract actual cost versus budget reporting, contract deliverable tracking.
- Other ad hoc reports and deliverables as mutually agreed to by both parties.

d. Propose Method for Tier I Pipeline Award Payments and Full Accounting of Banking Activity

- Obtain payment information and desired means of disbursement to recipient; for example, ACH or wire transfers
- Obtain W-9, Employer Identification, and/or Taxpayer Identification Information
- Establish payment processes
- Set up and maintain recipient master files
- Banking transaction and activity reporting

e. Monitor Tier I Pipeline Awardee Spending, Approve Payment Requests, and Disburse Payments

The IF will be responsible for determining that recipients have submitted valid purchase order or invoice payment requests that agree with contract terms and are aligned with budgeted funds. PCORI expects that the IF will utilize a purchase order/requisitioning system that will be used by all Tier I awardees to request payment under their award. The Tier I Pipeline Awards will be structured such that no advance payments will be awarded to recipients. Rather, as funds are disbursed by recipients, or as funds are required by recipients, payment requests will be initiated through a purchase order process or invoice payment request process. The IF is expected to maintain an integrated electronic system with purchase order capabilities.

The IF will perform the following:

- Review and approve purchase orders and invoice payment requests for budget and project appropriateness ***prior*** to disbursing funds.
 - Assure adherence to PCORI spending guidelines.
 - Review request for payment against the budget previously approved by PCORI in order to determine if funds were, in fact, budgeted and the contract value has not been exceeded.
 - Deny requests for payment if (1) there is a lack of funding, (2) there is insufficient budget authority to purchase, or (3) deliverables have not been met.
 - Determine if payment is contingent on achievement of a contract deliverable and, if so, whether evidence of the deliverable being met exists ***prior to payment***.
 - Provide PCORI expenditure reports showing project costs incurred after the close of each month so that the expenses can be recognized in the PCORI general ledger. Ideally, PCORI seeks these reports within three to five business days after month close.
- f. Process Payment Requests for Approved Disbursements**
- Once a payment request or purchase order is approved, the IF will make the payment directly to the Tier I awardee, with funds being drawn against a PCORI zero-balance account, imprest fund, wire transfer, or other innovative solution.
 - Track all disbursements in a project-reporting database.
- g. Track and Report Payments to PCORI**
- Track expenditures by recipient, per contract.
 - Prepare report of current period expenses, cumulative expenses, outstanding obligations, percentage of completion, and budget variance. A summary of all projects costs are required each month, and a file for upload with the expense data will be transmitted to PCORI for regular journal entries.
 - Propose a solution for an electronic data interchange.
- h. Monitor Financial Progress**
- Periodic review of budget versus actual data: per awardee, per month, per award cycle, and per year.
 - Review recipient cash expenditure reports to identify if there is a pattern of accelerated or delayed expenditures.
 - Report significant expenditure findings to PCORI no less frequently than monthly.

i. Contract Administration and Contract Closeout

- Track contract values, modifications, and period of performance.
- Track deliverable status; ensure final deliverables are transmitted to PCORI.
- Prepare final expenditure reports.
- Prepare a report to PCORI for completed, liquidated obligations.
- Process final payments.
- Inform PCORI regarding excess unspent funds.

j. Record Retention

- Maintain records throughout the life of this engagement and for one year after final payment. Records will include fully ratified Tier I awardee contracts and contract amendments.
- Forward all records to PCORI at contract closeout.

k. Tax Reporting

- Back up tax withholding, as needed, depending on tax treaty (if entity is foreign).
- Prepare 1099s annually and transmit to each Tier I awardee.

l. System Requirements

- IF will maintain a fully integrated accounting system, a project cost accounting system, and a purchase order/requisition system, for purposes of this RFQ. PCORI encourages proposals that include web- or cloud-based solutions.
- IF will provide copies of specific journals, ledgers, income statements, balance sheets, project cost reports, and other financial statements and data upon PCORI's request.
- All records provided to IFs are considered the property of PCORI and must be made available to PCORI upon request.
- Disbursements and reporting will be in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

m. Periodic Audits

- PCORI internal and/or external audit staff members will perform periodic audits of the IF with respect to services rendered to PCORI, financial systems, and internal controls.
- IF must cooperate to the fullest extent possible and provide any and all programmatic and financial data, as soon as reasonably possible. PCORI will communicate all information requests with at least 30 days' notice.
- IF must remediate any material findings as a result of audit.

n. Help Desk Interface with Tier I Pipeline Awardees

- IF will be expected to respond to calls, e-mail messages, and inquiries from Tier I awardees related to contract administration, management, accounting, project accounting, purchase orders, invoice payment requests, or other post-award matters.
- IF will be expected to resolve all Tier I awardee inquiries in a timely manner. Posted office hours are expected to be formalized with PCORI during contract negotiations.
- IF shall provide a customer-friendly user interface, as well as courteous personnel for all Tier I awardee interactions.

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Step 2: Consider the Requirements

Function 1: Operational and Programmatic Services

Based on their experience working with individual patients, stakeholders, researchers, or their respective organizations, IFs must identify and train applicants, assist with the review of applications, and manage all aspects of the contract.

The IF must have the following experience and/or meet the following mandatory requirements:

- Be familiar with PCORI's purpose and the principles of patient-centered outcomes research, recognize the types of research that PCORI does and does not fund, and understand the rationale for the Pipeline to Proposal Awards funding stream.
- Have significant funding experience in making and managing small awards to local patients, stakeholders, researchers, or their respective organizations with a wide range of skill and experience **or** have significant experience making and managing small awards across communities that are national in scope or e-communities.
- Have significant experience in providing training, technical assistance, and capacity building to patients, stakeholders, researchers, or their respective organizations with a wide range of skill and experience.
- Have well-established networks with extensive community reach within one of our four geographic areas (South, West, Midwest, and Northeast) or a national presence within the patient, stakeholder, or research community.
- If a state-based funder, have the ability to award and manage contracts beyond the state border.
- Be willing to work in close partnership with PCORI in the identification of the awardees, execution of the awards, technical assistance, evaluation of the awardees' progress, and communication and dissemination of the awardees' results.
- Have institutional or individual staff expertise in communications strategies and the ability to assist Tier I awardees in this area.
- Be willing to participate in and present findings at a convening of fellow IFs.
- Be willing to share learning outcomes on capacity and community building, partnership, and research formation processes and contribute to PCORI's methodology and engagement standards.

Key Personnel

To provide effective contract management, the IFs must utilize key staff with experience managing small awards. Preference will be given to organizations with experience engaging local patient, stakeholder, and research groups. PCORI is not seeking one specific management model that each of the five IFs must use; rather, we are seeking IFs that can use existing successful management models within the context of the Pipeline to Proposal Awards.

Deliverables

In support of Function 1: Operational and Programmatic Services, the IF shall provide the following deliverables within the time frame noted below.

Deliverable	Due
Plan for identifying and targeting hard-to-reach or historically underserved Tier I awardees, as well as projected spread of awardees across geographic area	4 weeks after award date
Plan for providing technical assistance to up to 10 Tier I awardees based on experience with successful small award management, including formation of governance structure, policies and procedures, and communications strategy	4 weeks after award date
Plan for routine communications with and evaluation of up to 10 Tier I awardees	4 weeks after award date
Outline for training plan (using PCORI training module) of Tier I applicants.	4 weeks after award date
Outline for training plan (using PCORI training module) of up to Tier I awardees	4 weeks after award date
Report of identified Tier I applicants and plan for launching funding announcement	8 weeks after award date
Monthly report-out with assigned PCORI staff summarizing outputs from all Tier I awardees	Monthly from time of award
Monthly conference call with other IFs to share learning (PCORI staff will also be on the call)	Monthly from time of award
Mid-point progress report summarizing status of up to Tier I	4.5 months from time of

awardees.	award
Final report summarizing key learning outcomes from up to Tier I awardees, including recommendations for advancement to Tier II Pipeline Awards	9 months from time of award
Share learning outcomes at convening of all IFs and all Tier I awardees. Travel costs of attending the convening should be factored into budgets for both IFs and Tier I awardees	9–12 months from time of award

Quality Measurement Criteria

The quality measurement criteria for the Function 1: Operational and Programmatic Services deliverables are shown below.

Service	Quality Level		
	Exceeds	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Small Grants or Contracts Management	Demonstrates excellent execution in funding community-building or capacity-building efforts locally or across national communities or e-communities	Demonstrates moderate execution in funding community-building or capacity-building efforts locally or across national communities or e-communities	Demonstrates poor execution in funding community-building or capacity-building efforts locally or across national communities or e-communities
Reach and Influence	Demonstrates vast knowledge of and trusted connection with potential awardees within geographic region or within national communities or e-community, reputation that will assist awardees with forming new and strengthening existing relationships	Demonstrates some knowledge of potential awardees within geographic region or within national communities or e-community, generally well respected and trusted, can help awardees to foster new relationships	Demonstrates poor knowledge of potential awardees, unknown or not well respected within geographic region or among national communities or e-community
Capacity-Building	Outstanding skills fostering small/young	Moderate skills fostering small/young organization	No or very limited experience fostering

Acumen	organization growth and formalization (creation of governance structure, development of policies and procedures) as well as very effective and responsive technical assistance and training	growth and formalization (creation of governance structure, development of policies and procedures) and somewhat effective and moderately responsive technical assistance and training	small/young organization growth and formalization and poor and unresponsive technical assistance and training
Research Plan Development	Provides outstanding assistance with the development of an initial research agenda oriented around a single issue or related group of issues, easily translatable into a patient-centered comparative effectiveness research question	Provides moderate assistance with the development of an initial research agenda, based on familiarity with comparative effectiveness research and PCOR	No experience with the development of an initial research agenda, unfamiliar with comparative effectiveness research and/or PCOR
Communication Strategies	Demonstrates outstanding communications strategies, particularly involving outreach to rural, underserved, or otherwise hard-to-reach communities (including development communications networks)	Demonstrates moderate communications strategies and/or a proven operational plan involving outreach to rural, underserved, or otherwise hard-to-reach communities	No or very limited experience with communications strategies
Active Portfolio Management	Manages contracts in a very hands-on manner with frequent communication between key contacts, frequent evaluations, and revisions or adjustments as needed	Shows moderate skills at managing grants/contracts in a very hands-on manner with less frequent communication between key contacts, frequent evaluations, and revisions or adjustments as needed	Demonstrates no, or very limited, experience with active portfolio management

Intermediate Funder's Quality Control and Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan

The IF shall describe its procedures to monitor the quality of the provided services relative to the scope described herein with the goal of providing and maintaining the highest level of customer service and satisfaction. These procedures should include:

- An internal method for monitoring, identifying, and correcting deficiencies in the quality of service furnished to PCORI, awardees, and external auditors.
- Provide at least monthly management reports to PCORI, throughout the duration of the contract.

As expected in a performance-based contract, the IF will be required to perform at an acceptable level of quality in order to continue supporting the PCORI Pipeline to Proposal Awards. Should the IF be unable to meet the requirements, the contract may be canceled due to unsatisfactory performance. The following quality guidelines will be used to measure IF performance. These guidelines are subject to change, if it is in the best interest of PCORI.

Function 2: Fiscal Agent Services

The IF will directly manage the project; interface with key PCORI program staff members; interface with Tier I awardees; ensure adherence to the approved budgets; meet established deadlines; ensure quality control; and provide any and all recommendations or process improvements in regular monthly reports to PCORI.

PCORI seeks an IF that will perform all post-award management, administration, accounting, payment, and close-out activities for its Tier I Pipeline awardees. PCORI expects that the IF will use an integrated purchase order/requisition system, accounts payable system, a project costing system, and have reporting capabilities to perform the Statement of Work (SOW) for this RFQ. The IF will serve as PCORI's fiscal agent, in that it will approve invoice payment requests and disburse payments against a PCORI zero-balance bank account, imprest fund, wire transfers, or other innovative solution.

The IF must have experience in post-award management, contract administration, accounting and reporting—as related to contracts. Federal or state grants experience may be substituted, dependent on the nature and scope of previous engagements.

The IF must have the following experience and/or meet the following mandatory requirements:

- Demonstrated fiscal accountability and responsibility.

- Successful past performance on similar engagements; plus, verifiable reputation as a respected provider of said services.
- Past experience working with non-profit organizations.
- Ability to complete all deliverables and related services in the SOW by the dates specified and present data in the appropriate reporting format described in this RFQ.
- Have sufficient financial resources to work on this engagement without any advance or down payments.
- Demonstrated record of delivering services on time, within contracted budgets, and with work products of the highest quality standards.
- Ability to work with persons of all levels, educational backgrounds, and contracting experience with tact, courtesy, and professionalism. Note that many or most of the Tier I awardees will have little or no prior contract recipient experience.
- Prior experience working with contracts and/or grants. Note that all of the Tier I Pipeline Awards are contracts, as opposed to grants.
- Appropriate corporate and employee bonding for all financial transactions.
- At least \$1 million of General Liability insurance.

Program Management

The IF shall provide the strategic guidance, project management, personnel, equipment, technology, and design necessary to assure that the highest quality service is provided on schedule and within budget. The IF shall have the capability to provide a full-scale solution as described in this RFQ and delivered within the time frame required. All personnel providing services under this contract shall be fluent in English and meet the following requirements. All key personnel shall be available to start on the contract start date.

Key Personnel

Senior Project Manager or Equivalent

The IF shall provide a Senior Project Manager (PM) who shall be responsible as the POC for PCORI. The PM shall have experience in the management of similar engagements and shall have adequate authority to make decisions for the timely resolution of problems. The PM shall coordinate closely and work collaboratively with the PCORI Engagement and PCORI Finance Departments. The qualifications of the PM include: the



proven ability to manage complex contract projects successfully; knowledge and understanding of GAAP and reporting requirements; and the ability to communicate to technical staff to manage issues and offer solutions. The PM shall possess a CPA, MBA, or equivalent credentials. This individual is also responsible for delivering the timely reports as described in the SOW of this RFQ. The PM must possess an ability to communicate effectively with PCORI program staff members and offer solutions in lay terms.

Other Staff/Subcontractors

The IF shall provide additional highly experienced staff, as needed, to develop and deliver the above-described services within the time frame and budget agreed upon and formalized in PCORI's Service Agreement. The IF shall propose how such staff shall assist in the development, launch, reporting, and maintenance of the above-described services. The IF shall provide a proposal that demonstrates its ability to support the services requested and effectively administer the SOW. The IF shall enforce all terms and conditions of the contract with all subcontractors.

Deliverables

PCORI is issuing this RFQ for services. Accordingly, successful contract performance requires daily service delivery with standard reporting formats and frequency, as delineated in the aforementioned SOW. PCORI expects services to be a seamless, continuous operation that enables limited PCORI project staff members to effectively manage a project of this size and scope.

Any deliverables not specifically mentioned in the SOW and not related to the successful delivery of contract management, accounting, and fiscal agent services for PCORI's Pipeline to Proposal Awards will be negotiated and mutually approved by PCORI and the selected IF.

The IF must consider electronic methods of communication of report information in order to minimize or eliminate unnecessary paperwork.



Quality Measurement Criteria

The quality measurement criteria for the Function 2: Fiscal Agent Services deliverables are identified below.

Service	Quality Level		
	Exceeds	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Tier I Pipeline Awardee Support Services	IF leverages past experience administering similar engagements and provides customized services that exceed Tier I awardee fiscal needs and PCORI's expectations in a fully compliant manner	IF accurately provides timely services to the Tier I awardees	IF provides inaccurate and/or delayed services to Tier I awardees, or fails to effectively service any segment of the aforementioned
Reporting	IF ascertains PCORI's needs; creates customized reports to provide accurate data; and ensures the successful interface of data to PCORI's financial and accounting systems	IF provides accurate and timely reports, as specified in the SOW and supports the successful interface of data to PCORI's financial and accounting systems	IF fails to provide accurate and timely reports, as specified in the SOW and/or fails to support the successful interface of data to PCORI's financial and accounting systems
Project Management	IF provides a full-time project management POC for continuous, supportive consultations with PCORI. The PM works with PCORI to understand needs, ascertain progress, and suggest innovations	IF dedicates a PM to work with PCORI, ensuring all time lines and deliverables are met	IF fails to dedicate a PM to the PCORI engagement
Deliverable Performance	Project deliverables and reports are accurate, complete, and submitted ahead of schedule	Project deliverables and reports are submitted on time	Project deliverables and reports are inaccurate and/or submitted behind schedule

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Step 3: Develop Your Solution

Overview

Your proposal should be organized into Volume I: Technical Solution, Management Approach, and Past Performance; and Volume II: Cost Proposal.

The submitted proposal must explain in detail the approach that the designated team would take to complete this work. This could include, but is not limited to, an outline of the fiscal agent process; technical specifications; proposed work plan including a major project milestones time line and fee structure; firm profile and history; proposed plans to subcontract operational and support services for completion of work, as well as the specific tasks to be assigned exclusively to each team member. The proposal should also detail any service options and costs.

The submitted proposal must also include a description of the composition of the project team, including key personnel and consultants. For each team member, include a resume that is no longer than two pages and is not included in the total page count.

See additional details below for required information that must be included in Volume I and Volume II.

Volume I: Technical Solution, Management Approach, and Past Performance

Volume I should be no longer than 10 pages, exclusive of the title page and table of contents. Additional materials such as key personnel resumes may be included in appendices. [See Step 5 for additional information](#) (p. 18).

Volume I must include:

1. A proposal outlining how the IF will accomplish the goals set forth in this RFQ.
2. A description of previous successful community-building and/or capacity-building funding and how the applicant will build on previous experiences to successfully manage up to 10 Tier I awardees.
3. A description of the reach of the applicant, including number of community members, geographic spread, and an estimation of total number of individuals reached to date.
4. A description of how the applicant engages in successful active portfolio management and the approach proposed for active portfolio management of up to 10 Tier I awardees.



5. A narrative of the institutional experience with communications strategies and the applicant's plan for communications guidance for up to 10 Tier I awardees

The IF shall demonstrate and describe its proposed solution based on the requirements in the SOW. Proposals must include the information outlined below. PCORI's ability to interpret and apply your proposal to these questions will factor into funding decisions.

Technical Solution

1. Describe in detail your organization's proposal to address the requirements outlined in this RFQ.
 - a) Affirm that your organization has the ability to deliver each and every element of the SOW.
 - b) Explain the process your organization will follow to design and/or implement the necessary systems to carry out fiscal agent duties.
 - c) Address important technology, software, and other specifications used in your solution.
 - d) Provide a timeline for the stand-up and rollout of the required fiscal agent services; direct support to up to 10 Tier I awardees; and submission of the requisite reports.
2. Describe the project process and methodology, including sample deliverables from past projects of similar size and scope.
3. Document examples of your organization's experience in designing/developing each of the project requirements.

Management Approach

1. Provide information about program management, financial resources or ability to obtain them, equipment and facilities, quality assurance approach, internal controls, and staffing to demonstrate your organization's ability to effectively manage Tier I awardees.
2. Provide a list of the project team members (including subcontractors) and short biographies of each team member. If using freelancers or outside resources, please identify them as such. PCORI reserves the right to approve/disapprove of selected resources. Indicate how many full-time staff your firm employs. Include resumes for key personnel. Resumes should be no longer than two pages and can be included in an appendix. Resume pages are not included in the page count.



Past Performance

1. Provide a brief history and profile of your organization and its experience providing services for organizations similar to PCORI (i.e., other non-profits, funding organizations, research institutes, or think tanks).
2. Identify at least three previous or existing clients within the last five years with a similar effort in the commercial or federal market. Include client name, period (dates) of performance, the POC name/e-mail/phone number, and a synopsis of work performed.

Volume II: Cost Proposal

Volume II should be submitted as a separate file (Word, Excel, or PDF format).

It is expected that the contract will be firm fixed price (FFP) with a fixed service fee (percentage) based on the volume of funds managed. As the award volume increases, PCORI expects fee schedules to decrease to show economies of scale. Other budget types (e.g., time and materials) may be proposed, but all rates must be fully substantiated. PCORI is willing to entertain innovative and efficient costing strategies, including a fixed fee based on the volume of funds administered as well as fixed monthly fees supported by the salary rates and project hours to be contributed by each key personnel and subcontracted staff.

IFs have the option to propose innovative costing approaches that may include fixed monthly fees or a service fee (percentage) based on the level of Pipeline to Proposal Awards funding administered. Thus, PCORI expects an increasing decreasing fee structure based on the volume of funds administered due to economies of scale. For example, if an IF manages \$100,000, the fee may be 15%; however, if the volume increases to \$500,000 for the IF, then there will be a sliding scale where the fee may decrease to 10%.

Although project-funding decisions will be based on the IF's ability to accomplish the SOW, responding organizations must include all expected expenditures and fees in their final bid. Travel costs in support of interactions with PCORI and/or the Tier I awardees may be proposed (at cost). All travel costs in support of the proposed SOW must receive prior approval and be directly tied to the project.

Cost Proposal

1. Provide a pricing proposal that supports the entire SOW outlined in this RFQ.
2. List key personnel and key services with a price or fee structure that is valid for at least two years from the project start date.

3. If needed, a brief budget narrative (no more than two pages) may be included to clarify unusual budget items or calculations. The Cost Proposal does not count toward the page count limitation, however it must conform to PCORI's formatting guidelines. [For more information, see Step 5](#) (p.18).
4. Describe your fee structure and how PCORI will be charged. This must encompass all design, development, implementation, administration, monitoring, reporting, and closeout.
5. The cost proposal should categorize costs separately as direct or indirect.
6. If an IF has proposed similar cost proposals for similar projects, then supporting detail regarding the similar projects should be provided to validate applicability and fair pricing.

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Step 4: Know the Review Criteria

PCORI reserves the right to reject proposals that are unreasonably low or high in price. Price will be evaluated for cost realism. The price will be determined with regard to the fulfillment of the requirements [outlined in Step 1](#) (p.20) and compared to industry averages for like services. PCORI will determine the IF's acceptability by assessing the IF's compliance with the terms of this RFQ.

Evaluation Categories

Outstanding—The IF has demonstrated that there is a high probability of success in a combination of past results, low risk, and professional distribution of services.

Good—The IF has demonstrated that there is a good probability of success in a combination of past results, moderate risk, and professional distribution of services.

Fair—The IF has demonstrated that there is marginal probability of success in a combination of past results, marginal risk, and professional distribution of services.

Poor—The IF has not demonstrated that there is a probability of success in this service-based effort.

Subsequent to receiving original proposals, PCORI reserves the right to notify all technically acceptable IFs within the competitive range and to provide them an opportunity to submit written Best and Final Offers (BAFOs) at the designated date and time. BAFOs will be evaluated and considered at PCORI's discretion. After receipt of a BAFO, no discussions will be reopened unless PCORI determines that it is clearly in PCORI's best interest to do so (e.g., it is clear that information available at that time is inadequate to reasonably justify IF selection and award based on the BAFOs received). If discussions are reopened, PCORI will issue an additional request for BAFOs to all technically acceptable IFs still within the competitive range.

At its discretion, PCORI reserves the right to also invite IFs who are technically acceptable to conduct a presentation for PCORI on the proposed effort for technical and management approaches identified in the submission. PCORI will notify vendors who meet the qualifications and provide the date, time, and format for the presentation. PCORI expects to fund five proposals. However, PCORI reserves the right to fund more than five proposals or to fund no proposal if, in its judgment, an acceptable proposal is not identified.



Function 1: Operational and Programmatic Services

An award will be made to the IFs who propose the best value, reach, and experience to execute PCORI’s mission. This RFQ outlines a unique program and need for contract management, technical assistance, and capacity building. Most importantly, the IF must have a vast body of experience funding small patient, stakeholder, or researcher groups. Accordingly, the IF’s past performance will be weighted most heavily.

- Does the IF demonstrate successful administration of similar projects for similar clients?
- Next in ranking order, an IF’s management approach and technical solution will be evaluated equally in order to ascertain a relative probability of success with this solicitation.
- How will the dedicated PM, key personnel, and other project staff operate to provide the best level of accurate services to PCORI and the Tier I awardees?
- Does the IF have the necessary systems, equipment, and procedures to deliver exceptional contract management and technical assistance?
- Finally, the Cost Proposal will be weighted below the aforementioned criteria. PCORI will prioritize proposals that excel in their management approach and past performance. Nevertheless, all Cost Proposals will be evaluated for reasonableness. All direct costs must have justification for the rate and project hours requested. Finally, all indirect rates are subject to independent verification through government-issued F&A agreements, independent audit reports, or financial statement analysis.

Evaluation Matrix for Function 1: Operational and Programmatic Services

Category	Weight of Rating Factor
Past Performance	50%
Technical Solution	20%
Management Approach	20%
Cost Proposal	10%



Function 2: Fiscal Agent Services

An award will be made to the IF who proposes the best value to PCORI’s mission. This RFQ outlines a unique program and need for contract management, accounting, and fiscal agent services. Accordingly, an IF’s management approach will be weighted most heavily.

- How will the dedicated PM, key personnel, and other project staff operate to provide the best level of accurate services to PCORI and the Tier I awardees?
- Next in ranking order, an IF’s past performance will be evaluated in order to ascertain a relative probability of success with this solicitation.
- Does the IF demonstrate successful administration of similar projects for similar clients?
- The third-highest ranked review criterion is Technical Solution. It is expected that all IFs will have systems and procedures that are compliant with GAAP and established US contracting practices. PCORI is not restricting eligibility to certain accounting systems, software, or reporting formats. Rather, it is expected that a successful IF will be well versed, efficient, and able to provide excellent customer service with the systems and procedures that have delivered past project success.
- Does the IF have the necessary systems, equipment, and procedures to deliver exceptional contract management, accounting, and fiscal agent services?
- Finally, the Cost Proposal will be weighted below the aforementioned criteria. PCORI is prioritizing those proposals that excel in their management approach and past performance. Nevertheless, all Cost Proposals will be evaluated for reasonableness. All direct costs must have justification for the rate and project hours requested. Finally, all indirect rates are subject to independent verification through government-issued F&A agreements, independent audit reports, or financial statement analysis.

Evaluation Matrix for Function 2: Fiscal Agent Services

Category	Weight of Rating Factor
Management Approach	40%
Past Performance	30%
Technical Solution	20%
Cost Proposal	10%

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Step 5: Submit Your Proposal

Overview

Proposals must include Volume I: Technical Solution, Management Approach, and Past Performance, and Volume II: Cost Proposal, must conform to the format and content instructions, and must address the Scope of Work and all deliverables. Questions should be addressed and submitted to rfp@pcori.org, referencing PCO-ENGAWD2013 in the subject line, NO LATER THAN 5 p.m. (Eastern Time) July 8, 2013. All written questions submitted prior to the deadline will be answered and posted on [PCORI's website](#).² Proposals and all related materials should be submitted NO LATER THAN 5 p.m. (Eastern Time) July 15, 2013. PCORI will announce the successful applicants no later than August 15, 2013.

Format

All text should be Arial or Times New Roman font, no less than 11 points with one-inch margins and single spaced. Graphics and tables are acceptable and encouraged; MS Word, MS Excel, or Adobe PDF formats. Proposals exceeding the 10-page limit (exclusive of the title page and table of contents) will not be considered.

Cover Letter

The cover letter must contain the following:

- IF's name and mailing address
- Reference to the solicitation (RFQ) number (PCO-ENGAWD2013)
- Technical and contract points of contact—name, phone number, and e-mail address
- Business size (Large, Small, State/Federal Certifications—MBE, 8(a), HUBZone, and so forth)
- Dunn & Bradstreet Number (DUNS)
- Federal Tax ID (EIN, TIN, SS)
- Affirmation that the quote (cost proposal) is valid for at least 30 days

² Answers will be posted at pcori.org/funding-opportunities/pipeline-to-proposal-awards-initiative



- A statement specifying the extent of agreement with all terms, conditions, and provisions included in the solicitation and agreement to furnish any or all items upon which prices are offered at the price set opposite each item
- Acknowledgment of any amendments by reference

Submission Deadline

- All proposals should be sent NO LATER THAN 5 p.m. ET July 15, 2013, to rfp@pcori.org with PCO-ENGAWD2013 clearly listed in the subject line.

Anticipated Award Date

- August 15, 2013

Pipeline to Proposal Awards Timeline

Year	Solicitation	Frequency
2013	Requests for Quotes (RFQs) for IFs	Issued Once
2013	Requests for Applications (RFAs) for Tier I Pipeline Awards issued through the five identified IFs	Issued Once
2014 and Beyond	RFQs for IFs	Issued Twice

Late Submissions

Late proposals, requests for modification, or requests for withdrawal will not be considered, unless a late modification of a successful proposal makes terms more favorable for PCORI.

Retention of Submissions

All proposal documents will become the property of PCORI and retained by PCORI, and, therefore, will not be returned to the IFs.

Withdrawal or Modification of Submissions

An IF may modify or withdraw its proposal upon written, electronic, or facsimile notice if received at the location designated in the solicitation for submission of proposals, but not later than the closing date and time for receipt of proposals.

Protection of Human Subjects (if applicable)

PCORI adopts, by reference, the Human Subjects requirements of 45 CFR Part 46. If the proposed research to be conducted by Tier I awardees will involve human subjects, refer



to the Supplemental Instructions for Preparing the Protection of Human Subjects Section of the Research Plan in Part II of the Instructions for the PHS 398 Form, as found on the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\) website](#).³ The IFs will be responsible for ensuring Tier I awardee compliance with all applicable standards. PCORI will require that all Tier I awardees undergo PCORI awardee training as facilitated through an IF.

Compliance

The IFs must comply with PCORI's Rules and Regulations (to be provided to awarded IFs), all required forms, and any changes in procedures. IFs will remain informed of any such changes and updates within 30 days, as necessary, by the PCORI Finance Office. All records associated with PCORI Tier I awardees shall be properly maintained, updated, and made available to auditors. Upon the request of employees or other persons with disabilities participating in official business, the IF must arrange necessary and reasonable accommodations for the impaired individuals per Section 508 Compliance.

Organizational Conflict of Interest

The IF, upon award, shall sign a statement confirming that it does not have and will prevent any organizational conflict of interest. If a conflict arises, the IF will immediately advise PCORI.

Insurance

The IF, at its own expense, shall provide and maintain at least \$1 million of General Liability insurance during the entire period of performance of this contract.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

The IF shall not release any sensitive, confidential, or proprietary information, without prior written approval from PCORI. At the time of award, the IF will be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement that is incorporated into the PCORI Service Agreement.

Furnishing of Equipment/Property

The IF will furnish all equipment/property necessary to perform the work outlined in this RFQ at no cost to PCORI.

³ Available at www.grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.doc.