Cycle 3 2017: Improving Methods for Conducting Patient-Centered Outcomes Research (PCOR)

Applicant Town Hall
October 24, 2017
Agenda

• Programmatic Overview
• Administrative Overview
• Merit Review Criteria
• Questions and Answers

Submit questions via the Question box in GoToWebinar

Ask a question via phone at the end of the presentation
Today’s Presenters

Emily Evans, PhD MPH
Program Officer, Clinical Effectiveness and Decision Science

Ashton Ferrara
Associate, Contracts Operations

Laura Sheahan, PhD
Merit Review Officer
Programmatic Overview

Emily Evans, PhD MPH
Program Officer, Clinical Effectiveness and Decision Science
Cycle 3 2017: Methods PFA Overview

- PCORI seeks to fund applications that make a significant *methodological* contribution to PCOR/CER.


---

**Available Funds & Project Duration:**

- Up to $750,000 in total direct costs per project
- Projects should be completed within 3 years
Cycle 3 2017 PFA: Programmatic Priorities

Resubmissions and New Applications

- Methods Related to Ethical and Human Subjects Protections (HSP) Issues in PCOR/CER
- Methods to Improve Study Design
- Methods to Support Data Research Networks
- Methods to Improve the Use of Natural Language Processing

Research supported by the Methods PFA
General Guidance: Methods LOIs & Applications (1/2)

• Background and Significance
  – Identify, explain, and provide support for the specific anticipated methodological contributions to PCOR/CER.
  – Projects that simply apply methods or approaches to a particular domain or seek to disseminate an approach will not align with program priorities.
  – Novelty and strong engagement cannot compensate for lack of scientific rigor.

• Study Design or Approach
  – Provide a detailed description of the methodological work that is planned (e.g., theoretical development, simulation studies, data collection and analysis, empirical analyses, etc.).
  – Applications must adhere to all relevant PCORI Methodology Standards.
General Guidance: Methods LOIs & Applications (2/2)

• **Appropriate Data Sources**
  
  — Applications must justify why the chosen data sources are optimal for the project (rather than just convenient to obtain).

• **Evaluation**
  
  — Describe and justify an appropriate evaluative framework (including choice of methodological comparators, as applicable) and address potential limitations of the proposed approach.
  
  — Identify and assess underlying assumptions and describe how those assumptions will be examined and the potential impact of their violation.
In any study, methods are critical. PCORI’s Methodology Committee developed Methodology Standards to which patient-centered CER must adhere.

The 48 standards can be grouped into 2 broad categories and 12 topic areas.

**Cross-Cutting Standards**
- Formulating Research Questions
- Patient Centeredness
- Data Integrity & Rigorous Analyses
- Preventing/Handling Missing Data
- Heterogeneity of Treatment Effects

**Design-Specific Standards**
- Data Registries
- Data Networks
- Causal Inference Methods*
- Adaptive & Bayesian Trial Designs
- Studies of Medical Tests
- Systematic Reviews
- Research Designs Using Clusters

*The first standard for Causal Inference Methods (CI-1) is considered cross-cutting and applicable to all PCOR/CER studies.*
Administrative Overview

Ashton Ferrara
Associate, Contracts Operations
LOI and Application

• Full applications are invited based on the information provided in the LOI.

• Changes to the following require PCORI’s approval:
  • Principal Investigator
  • Institution
  • Research question(s)
  • Specific Aims
  • Study Design
  • Comparators
  • Budget/period of performance
Research Strategy

• **Maximum 12 pages in length**

• **Use the Research Plan Template as your guide:**
  • Objectives
  • Background
  • Significance
  • Study Design or Approach
  • Engagement Plan

• **Provide all the information requested, as outlined in the template.**
Research Team and Environment

• Describe the research team’s capabilities to accomplish the goals of the proposed research project and the appropriateness of the research environment to conduct the study.
• Provide all key personnel professional and partner profiles/biosketches and detailed site descriptions within the People and Places Template as a separate PDF upload.
Dissemination & Implementation

• Describe how you will make study results available to study participants after you complete the analyses.

• Describe possible barriers to disseminating and implementing the results of this research in other settings.
Consortium Contractual Arrangement

- Describe the proposed components of the research project that will be performed by subcontracted organizations.
  - Explain the strengths that these partners bring to the overall project to ensure successful submission of contract deliverables in accordance with the milestone schedule.
Applicants can include additional materials that they believe are useful, but reviewers are not required to review the appendix materials in evaluating the application.
People and Places Template - Biosketch

• Required for all key personnel
  • Use NIH biosketch or PCORI’s format
  • List all partners within the Key Personnel section

• Patient and/or stakeholder biosketches
• Provide a description of the facilities that will be used during the project, including capacity, capability, characteristics, proximity, and availability to the project.

People and Places Template – Project/Performance Site(s)
Leadership Plan Template (Dual PI application)

- Describe the governance and organizational structure of the leadership team and the research project;
- Delineate the administrative, technical, scientific, and engagement responsibilities for each PI and the rationale for submitting a dual-PI application;
- Discuss communication plans and the process for making decisions on scientific and engagement direction;
- Describe the procedure for resolving conflicts.

- Note: If this template is applicable, it should be uploaded as the first section of the People and Places Template.
Letters of Support

- Letters of support should be addressed to the PI to demonstrate the commitment of key personnel and supporting organizations to the proposed project.

- Letters of support should be organized in the following manner:
  - Letters of organizational support
  - Letters of collaboration
  - Letters confirming access to patient populations, data sets, and additional resources
Milestones/Deliverables

• Milestones
  – Significant events, deliverables, tasks, and/or outcomes that occur over the course of the project that mark progress toward the project’s overall aims

• Deliverables
  – Measurable and verifiable outcomes or products that a project team must create and deliver according to the contract terms

• See Appendix 1 of the Application Guidelines for examples of milestones.
Budget

• In PCORI Online, for the Budget tab complete the following sections:
  – Detailed Research Project Budget for Each Year of the Research Project Period
  – Detailed Peer-Review Budget for Peer-Review-Related Costs
  – Budget Summary for Entire Project

• In the Templates and Uploads tab, upload the **Budget Justification Template** for the prime applicant and each subcontracted organization for the entire Research Project Budget and Peer-Review Budget for all research and peer-review-related costs. Include the federally negotiated or independently audited indirect cost rate letter (prime contractor) and fringe benefit rate policy verification document (prime contractor)
Using the PCORI Online System

• Navigate to PCORI Online (https://pcori.force.com/engagement)
• Log into the PCORI system early
• Please only use **Chrome, Safari, and Firefox browsers** to access the system.
• The PI and the AO cannot be the same individual.
• [PCORI Online Training Slides](#)
• [PCORI Online Application Cheat Sheet](#)
Tips for Success

• Adhere to the Application Guidelines for the appropriate PFA and funding cycle
• Start and submit application early
• Have a copy of your approved LOI readily accessible
• Ensure that all team members can see the application in the system (check during the LOI stage)
• Inform your AO of your intent to submit
• Clearly describe comparators for the study
• Document evidence of efficacy/effectiveness for the intervention and comparator(s) and/or demonstrate that they are in widespread use
• Justify your power calculations based on prior evidence of anticipated effect sizes
• Clearly demonstrate the feasibility of the study
  – Show that you and the team are well-qualified to conduct the research
  – Define and support your recruitment and retention plan
  – Document that sites are already committed to participating
  – Include realistic timelines for site start-up, IRB approval, and recruitment
• Submit the completed application on/before the due date by 5:00 PM ET
What happens to your application after you submit it?
Administrative Screening

Applicants **must follow** the administrative requirements stated in PCORI’s Application Guidelines.

Applications may be administratively withdrawn for the following reasons:

- Exceeding budget or time limitations
- Not using PCORI’s required templates
- Submitting incomplete sections or applications
Programmatic Screening

Applications may be programmatically withdrawn for the following reasons:

• Deviation from the approved LOI
• Inclusion of cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA)
• Inclusion of development and dissemination of clinical practice guidelines (CPG)
• Not responsive to the program-specific PFA
Merit Review Overview

Laura Sheahan, PhD
Merit Review Officer
Merit Review Process

- pcori.org/content/merit-review-process
Application Review

Applications are reviewed against six criteria:

1. Study identifies critical methodological gap(s) in PCOR/CER
2. Potential for the study to improve PCOR/CER methods
3. Scientific merit
4. Investigator(s) and environment
5. Patient-centeredness
6. Patient and stakeholder Engagement

- Each application is reviewed by three scientists, one patient, and one other stakeholder
- PCORI’s Board of Governors makes funding decisions based on merit review and staff recommendations.
Criterion 1. Study identifies critical methodological gap(s) in PCOR/CER

- Does the application identify and make a persuasive argument for addressing critical gaps in current PCOR/CER methods as noted in the published scientific literature?
Criterion 2. Potential for the study to improve PCOR/CER Methods

- Does the application articulate clearly how the development, refinement, comparison of methods, and/or the novel application of methods to PCOR/CER improves the validity, trustworthiness, and usefulness of PCOR/CER findings?

- Are the PCOR/CER methods generated from this study likely to inform best practices or standards for PCOR/CER?
Criterion 3. Scientific merit (research design, analysis, and outcomes)

- Does the application provide a clear conceptual framework or theoretical model and empirical evidence that inform the study design, key variables or constructs, analytical approach, and relationships being tested or explored?

- Does the application provide a clear Research Plan with rigorous methods that demonstrates adherence to the PCORI Methodology Standards and reflects state-of-the-art thinking and practice in the relevant methodological area?

- Are the study scope and timeline realistic, including the completion of specific scientific and engagement milestones?
Criterion 4. Investigator(s) and Environment

- How well-qualified are the PIs, collaborators, and other researchers to conduct the proposed activities? Is there evidence of sufficient clinical or statistical expertise (if applicable)?
- Does the investigator or co-investigator have demonstrated experience conducting projects of a similar size, scope, and complexity?
- If the project is collaborative or dual-PI, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise? Are the leadership, governance, and organizational structures appropriate for the project?
- Is the level of effort for each team member appropriate for successfully conducting the proposed work?
- Does the application describe adequate availability of and access to facilities and resources (including patient populations, samples, and collaborative arrangements) to carry out the proposed research?
- Is the institutional support appropriate for the proposed research?
Criterion 5. Patient-Centeredness

- Does the application articulate clearly how the study will improve PCOR/CER methods that address outcomes of interest to patients and their caregivers?
  - A study can be patient-centered even if the end-user is not the patient, as long as patients will benefit from the study findings (e.g., methods to produce more valid, trustworthy, and useful PCOR/CER findings).
Criterion 6. Patient and Stakeholder Engagement

• Are patients and/or other relevant stakeholders meaningfully engaged in appropriate phases of the research?

• Does the proposal demonstrate the principles of reciprocal relationships; co-learning; partnership; and trust, transparency, and honesty?

• If engagement is deemed inappropriate in some or all aspects of the proposed research, does the application justify why it is not appropriate?
# Submission and Key Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOI Deadline</td>
<td>October 31, 2017 by 5:00pm ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Deadline</td>
<td>February 6, 2018 by 5:00pm ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merit Review Dates</td>
<td>April 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards Announced</td>
<td>August 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earliest Start Date</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Refer to the funding opportunities page in our Funding Center (http://www.pcori.org/funding/opportunities) for the following resources:

- PFA and Application Guidelines
- PCORI Online User Manuals
- Sample Engagement Plans
- General Applicant FAQs: https://help.pcori.org/Applicant-Resources
- PCORI Online: https://pcori.force.com/engagement/
- Research Methodology: http://www.pcori.org/node/4020
Where can I find help?

Visit pcori.org/apply
- Application Guidelines
- FAQs
- PCORI Online User Manuals
- Sample Engagement Plans

Schedule a Call with a Program Officer
- Submit a request at pcori.org/content/research-inquiry
- Call 202-627-1884 (programmatic inquiries)
- E-mail sciencequestions@pcori.org

Contact our Helpdesk
- E-mail pfa@pcori.org
- Call 202-627-1885 (administrative and technical inquiries)
Q&A

Ask a question via the question box in GoToWebinar

Ask a question via phone at the end of the presentation.

*If we are unable to address your question during this time, e-mail the Helpdesk at pfa@pcori.org.*
Thank You