Cycle 1 2016 Funding Cycle
PCORI Application Guidelines for Improving Methods for Conducting Patient-Centered Outcomes Research (PCOR)

Published February 1, 2016

These guidelines apply to the Cycle 1 2016 Funding Cycle for Improving Methods for Conducting Patient-Centered Outcomes Research (PCOR). Funding announcements, templates, and other resources are available at http://www.pcori.org/Cycle-1-2016-methods/. The Cycle 1 2016 Funding Cycle closes June 6, 2016, at 5 p.m. (ET).
About PCORI

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (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. PCORI helps people make informed healthcare decisions and improves healthcare delivery and outcomes by producing and promoting high-integrity, evidence-based information that comes from research guided by patients, caregivers, and the broader healthcare community.

PCORI was authorized by Congress in 2010 as a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization. PCORI’s purpose, as defined by our authorizing legislation, is to help 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.”

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What Has Changed for the Cycle 1 2016 Funding Cycle:

- Resubmission Policy and Letter section updated
- New dual-Principal Investigator (PI) Plan policies
- New Leadership Plan Template created
- Research Plan Template updated
- Updated language in the Detailed Peer Review Budget for Peer Review-Related Costs section
- Revisions to Methods Research Areas of Interest (RAIs); see the Cycle 1 2016 Improving Methods for Conducting PCOR PFA
I. About These Guidelines

This document provides key information to help researchers prepare for and respond to the Improving Methods for Conducting Patient-Centered Outcomes Research PCORI Funding Announcement (PFA), available at [http://www.pcori.org/Cycle-1-2016-methods/](http://www.pcori.org/Cycle-1-2016-methods/).

These guidelines should answer many questions applicants may have, but the following resources are also available:

- PCORI’s [Applicant FAQs](http://www.pcori.org/content/faqs-applicants/) and [Methods-Specific FAQs](http://www.pcori.org/funding-opportunities/how-apply/have-question/faqs-applicants-improving-methods-conducting-patient) cover common questions about PCORI and the application process.
- Visit PCORI’s [Help Center](https://help.pcori.org/hc/en-us/) for additional applicant resources.
- **For Programmatic Inquiries:** Please contact the PCORI Helpdesk via email (sciencequestions@pcori.org), phone (202-627-1884), or online ([http://www.pcori.org/PFA/inquiry](http://www.pcori.org/PFA/inquiry)). PCORI will provide a response within three business days. However, we cannot guarantee that all questions will be addressed within three business days prior to a Letter of Intent (LOI) or application deadline.
- **For Administrative, Financial, or Technical Inquiries:** Please contact the PCORI Helpdesk at pfa@pcori.org. PCORI will provide a response within two business days. Please note that during the week of the application deadline, response times may exceed two business days. Applicants may also call the PCORI Helpdesk (202-627-1885).

It is the applicant’s responsibility to submit the application on or before the deadline. Please refer to [PCORI’s Policy on Submission of Research Contract Applications](http://www.pcori.org/funding-opportunities/how-apply/policy-submission-research-contract-applications/).

Administrative Issues

To ensure a thorough and competitive review process, PCORI strictly enforces the formatting and administrative compliance guidelines outlined in the PFA, FAQs, and Application Guidelines. Applicants who fail to submit the required documents or who exceed the stated page limits may be rejected from the merit review process.

All rejection decisions made by the Contracts Management and Administration (CMA) department are final. Please email pfa@pcori.org with any formatting or administrative compliance questions to ensure that your LOI or application will not be deemed noncompliant once submitted to PCORI. See [Appendix 3: Administrative Actions](#).

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1 Available at [http://www.pcori.org/content/faqs-applicants/](http://www.pcori.org/content/faqs-applicants/).
Unless otherwise stated within the Application Guidelines, all submissions on behalf of an applicant organization are the property of that organization. PCORI will not share or publicize the contents of an organization’s application.

**Funding Mechanism**

PCORI issues contracts, rather than grants, to fund and administer meritorious research. PCORI funds projects that demonstrate the highest probability of being completed within its research project period; being completed within the approved budget; and of meeting its milestones and deliverables. Applicants should submit representative budgets and Research Plans that allow the project to conclude within the approved period of performance.

As part of its active portfolio management, PCORI provides contractual and programmatic monitoring throughout the contract term period. To review PCORI’s contract terms and conditions, see PCORI’s standard Contract for Funded Research Projects.5

**II. Who Can Apply**

Applications may be submitted by any private-sector research organization, including any nonprofit or for-profit organization; any public-sector research organization, including any university or college hospital or healthcare system; any laboratory or manufacturer; or any unit of local, state, or federal government. The Internal Revenue Service must recognize all U.S. applicant organizations. Nondomestic components of organizations based in the United States and foreign organizations may apply, as long as there is demonstrable benefit to the U.S. healthcare system and U.S. efforts in the area of patient-centered research can be shown clearly. Organizations may submit multiple funding applications. Individuals are not permitted to apply. If you have questions about eligibility, please contact pfa@pcori.org.

**Note:** A Principal Investigator (PI) can only submit one LOI per PFA. However, an individual listed as a PI on one LOI may be listed as and serve in another role (e.g., co-investigator (co-I) or consultant) on other LOIs within the same PFA during the same cycle. A PI may submit multiple LOIs to different program PFAs in a cycle, but the PI must ensure that the research topics and projects are not similar. If a PI submits an LOI to multiple program PFAs, LOIs that exhibit scientific overlap or that appear to be duplicate submissions will be disqualified. PCORI will contact the PI and provide him or her with an opportunity to choose which PFA he or she would like to apply to. This applies to single and dual-PI submissions.

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III. How To Apply

To submit an LOI and full application (if invited), including all required documents, please follow the instructions provided in these guidelines and in PCORI Online. All documents must be submitted through PCORI Online. To submit an application or to register your organization in PCORI Online, you need a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and an Employer Identification Number (EIN). You can apply for a DUNS number and an EIN, if applicable.

- **Step 1: Register**

  To apply for PCORI funding, an applicant (PI or PI designee) must register in PCORI Online. A name, an email address, a password, and a security question and answer are required to register. PCORI strongly recommends that only the PI create the LOI/application record because whoever creates the record will have permanent access to it in PCORI Online.

- **Step 2: Submit a Letter of Intent**

  An LOI is required for new and resubmitted applications. Download the PFA-Specific LOI Template from the PCORI Funding Center. LOIs that exceed the three-page limit will not be reviewed. For formatting instructions, please reference Step 4.

  To submit an LOI you must go into PCORI Online, complete the required fields, and upload the completed PFA-specific LOI into the system. For detailed instructions on how to navigate the system, please reference the PCORI Online User Manual: Submitting a Letter of Intent.

- **Step 3: Begin Application Process**

  Applicants will be notified by the date specified within the PFA as to whether or not they have been invited to submit a full application.

  The application consists of six sections within PCORI Online, all of which must be completed before submission. Please log in to PCORI Online to view the full list of questions.

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6 Available at https://pcori.fluxx.io/.
7 Available at https://www.dandb.com/.
8 Available at http://irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&-Self-Employed/Apply-for-an-Employer-Identification-Number-(EIN)-Online/.
Step 4: Format and Complete Required Templates

Required templates are available in the PCORI Funding Center. Find the correct PFA to which you are applying and download the correct PFA-specific templates because they vary from PFA to PFA and cycle to cycle. Keep the following in mind:

- Do not reorganize sections within the templates.
- Do not alter main header questions of the templates within your submission.
- You may delete instructional text.

All required documents must be formatted as follows:

- **Header:** Include the PI’s full name on every page at the top left.
- **Margins:** Use at least half-inch margins. The header may fall within the top margin, but the body of the text should not begin closer than a half-inch from the edge of the page.
- **Font:** Use size 11 Calibri. Figures, tables, and captions may be size 8.
- **Page Numbers:** Each uploaded document must be consecutively numbered.
- **Spacing:** Use single spacing.
- **References:** Use American Medical Association (AMA) citation style.

Step 5: Upload Required Documents

Follow the Application Checklist included in these guidelines to enter required information. Upload required documents to PCORI Online in the correct order. Use Adobe Acrobat Professional to combine documents into a single PDF file for upload. To upload, select the name of the required document type from the drop-down list. For detailed instructions, refer to the Templates and Uploads section of the PCORI Online User Manual: Submitting an Application.

Step 6: Submit for Authorization

Once all required information has been completed and uploaded, select “Submit to AO” to forward the application to your Administrative Official (AO) to authorize and submit. The AO must approve and submit the final application for official submission to PCORI prior to the deadline. **The PI should notify the AO when the application is ready for review, AO approval, and submission.** The PI and the AO may not be the same individual. Both the AO and the PI will receive an email confirming that PCORI has received the application.

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10 Available at http://www.pcori.org/funding-opportunities/.
11 See adobe.com for more information on Adobe Acrobat Professional.
IV. When To Apply

Deadlines for each funding cycle are noted in the PCORI Funding Center and in the PFA. System or technical issues with PCORI Online, which affect the on-time submission of an application must be reported to PCORI before the specified deadline. Problems with computer systems at the applicant’s organization or failure to follow instructions in PCORI Online, PCORI Application Guidelines, or PFAs are not valid issues warranting consideration of a deadline extension. Please see PCORI’s Policy on Submission of Research Contract Applications\(^\text{12}\) for complete information.

V. What To Include

Note: Only applicants selected to submit an application should begin the application process. You will be notified by April 8, 2016, as to whether or not you have been invited to submit an application.

Applicants are encouraged to review this entire section. Print and complete the provided Application Checklist to ensure that the LOI and application are submitted correctly. All required templates can be downloaded from the PCORI Funding Center.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{12}\) Available at http://www.pcori.org/funding-opportunities/how-apply/policy-submission-research-contract-applications/.

\(^{13}\) Available at http://www.pcori.org/funding-opportunities/.
## Application Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter of Intent</th>
<th>Submission Method</th>
<th>Length/Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter of Intent (LOI)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Principal Investigator (PI) and Contact Information</td>
<td>Enter into PCORI Online</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PCORI Funding Announcement (PFA)-Specific LOI Template</td>
<td>Save file as “PI LastName_(last five digits of Request ID)_LOI.pdf” and upload</td>
<td>3 pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Submission Method</th>
<th>Length/Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PI and Contact Information</strong></td>
<td>Entered previously as part of the LOI; review and modify if needed</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Information</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technical Abstract</td>
<td>Enter into PCORI Online</td>
<td>6,000 characters/spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public Abstract</td>
<td>Enter into PCORI Online</td>
<td>3,000 characters/spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Project Narratives</td>
<td>Enter into PCORI Online</td>
<td>Refer to PCORI Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Personnel</strong></td>
<td>Enter into PCORI Online</td>
<td>As needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milestones/Deliverables Template</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save file as “Milestones_PI LastName.pdf” and upload</td>
<td>3 pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resubmission Letter (if appropriate)</strong></td>
<td>Save file as “Resubmission_PI LastName.pdf” and upload</td>
<td>1 page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Plan Template</strong></td>
<td>Save file as “ResearchPlan_PI LastName.pdf” and upload as a single file</td>
<td>As noted below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Research Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td>20 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dissemination and Implementation Potential</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Replication and Reproducibility of Research and Data Sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Protection of Human Subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consortium Contractual Arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• References Cited</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appendix (optional)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People and Places Template</strong></td>
<td>Save as “PeoplePlaces_PI LastName.pdf” and upload</td>
<td>As noted below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership Plan (required if proposing dual-PI application)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Professional Profile/Biosketch: 5 pages per individual
- Patient/Stakeholder Partner Profile/Biosketch: 5 pages per individual
- Project/Performance Site(s) and Resources: 15 pages

**Budget Template**  
Combine and save as “Budget_PI LastName.pdf” and upload  
As needed

- Detailed Budget for Each Project Year (prime and subcontractors)
- Budget Summary for Entire Project (prime and subcontractors)
- Budget Justification (prime and subcontractors)
- Federally Negotiated or Independently Audited Indirect Cost Rate Letter (prime contractor)
- Fringe Benefit Rate Policy Verification Document (prime contractor)

**Letters of Support**  
Save as “Letters.PI LastName.pdf” and upload as a single file  
As needed

- Letters of Support Table
- Letters of Support
Letter of Intent

An LOI must be submitted before you complete your application. Enter the information in the required fields in PCORI Online.

Upon receipt of the LOIs, PCORI program staff will screen them for programmatic fit and overlap with projects in the existing portfolio. If program staff determine that the LOI is a better fit for another program, they may transfer the LOI to that program. If that program is interested in inviting the applicant to submit an application, PCORI will notify the applicant and obtain his or her approval to switch programs. An applicant whose LOI does not meet program areas of interest or whose LOI substantially overlaps with existing projects in the portfolio will not be invited to submit an application. Applicants will receive an email notification accepting or declining their LOI, as specified in the PFA.

PI and Contact Information

PCORI refers to three specific roles with particular responsibilities. Please keep the following in mind as you complete this section:

Principal Investigator (PI)

A. Description

- If electing to submit an application with two PIs, one PI must be designated as the Contact PI. The Contact PI is responsible for submitting the application and will serve as PCORI’s primary point of contact for all communication. **No more than two PIs can be named on an application.**
- The PI(s) is responsible for the project’s engagement, scientific, or technical aspects, as well as the project’s peer review-related activities.
- If applicable, the Contact PI’s institution must be the primary institution for the award.
- PIs can participate in other applications (from the same or another organization) in the same or a different role, such as co-I or consultant. Refer to the Who Can Apply section for specific instructions.

B. Activities

- The PI(s) assumes responsibility and accountability for research execution, compliance, and organization conduct.
- If applicable, the Contact PI is responsible for submitting the application, submitting all progress reports, and serving as PCORI’s programmatic and administrative contact. All PCORI communication will be sent to the Contact PI, and it is his or her responsibility to share PCORI communications with PI #2.
- The PI(s) manages day-to-day operations of the project.
- The PI(s) acts as the organization’s lead research representative.
Administrative Official (AO)

A. Description

• The AO is responsible for matters related to the award and administration of the contract.
• The AO cannot be the PI.
• The AO’s signature certifies that the organization will be accountable for appropriately using the funds awarded and for performing the PCORI-supported project.

B. Activities

• The AO manages contract activation, modifications, and additional administrative matters.
• The AO certifies contract compliance of all applicable assurances and certifications referenced in the application.

Financial Official (FO)

A. Description

• The FO is responsible for all required financial reporting.

B. Activities

• The FO completes and certifies expenditure reports on behalf of the organization.
• The FO accounts for contract funds and submits invoices and payment details.

PFA-Specific LOI Template

Download the Improving Methods for Conducting PCOR LOI Template from the PCORI Funding Center. To submit an LOI, upload the completed LOI to PCORI Online and complete the required fields. Provide a description that allows the scientific community to understand the project, including the aims and study design, without reviewing the full application. Any LOI that exceeds three pages (excluding the reference list) will not be reviewed.

Note: All LOI Templates should follow the formatting guidelines provided in Step 4.

To submit an LOI, save the completed PFA-specific LOI as a PDF. Label your LOI file using the following nomenclature: “PI Last Name_(last five digits of Request ID)_LOI.pdf.” A request ID number will be generated automatically once the LOI has been saved. When you select the “Save and Review” button, the new request ID number will be visible at the top of the web page in PCORI Online.

Application Requirements

You are invited to submit an application based on the information provided in the LOI. Any changes to the following require PCORI’s approval:

• Principal Investigator (Contact PI and PI #2)
• Institution
• Study design
• Research question(s)
- Specific aims
- Comparators

If you need to change any of this information or have any questions, email pfa@pcori.org.

PI and Contact Information
Review information transferred from your LOI and update as needed.

Project Information
Enter the following information directly into PCORI Online.

Technical Abstract
Provide a technical abstract within PCORI Online that summarizes your research strategy. The abstract should include the following sections:

- **Background and Significance:** State the methodological gap the research is designed to address. Describe how the proposed research will advance methods for patient-centered outcomes research/comparative effectiveness research (PCOR/CER) and the importance of this research to the relevant stakeholders (e.g., patients, clinicians, and policy makers).

- **Objectives:** Describe the research objective(s) and list the specific aims that will address the identified methodological gap.

- **Methods:** Provide a detailed description of the methodological work that is planned for each of the specific aims and the ways in which it addresses the identified methodological gaps. Include the following elements:
  - Study design
  - Study population and sample size (if applicable)
  - Primary data collection methods (if applicable)
  - Data sources and data sets (if applicable)
  - Analytic methods

- **Outcomes (projected) and Anticipated Impact:** Identify and explain the specific anticipated contributions and applications of the methodological advancement to PCOR/CER as well as the patients and/or other stakeholders who will benefit from it.

Project Narratives
PCORI may use these responses for programmatic assessment, to assign applications to the appropriate review panel, and to provide a high-level overview to merit review panel members. In addition to responding to other questions, you must fill in the following textboxes (refer to PCORI Online for character limits, including spaces, for each of the bullets listed below):

- Specific Aims
- Engagement Plan (patients and/or other stakeholders, if applicable)
Log in to PCORI Online to view the full list of questions that must be completed prior to submission.

Public Abstract

Provide a description of your project, written in lay language that the general public will understand. Please include the following:

- Description of the problem your project seeks to solve
- Outcomes you hope to achieve
- Brief background on why this project is important to patients and/or other stakeholders and how they will be engaged in meaningful and appropriate ways in the research process

This summary should be comprehensible to a variety of audiences and will be reviewed by scientists, patients, and stakeholders during the merit review process. Public abstracts from applications that are awarded a contract will be posted on PCORI’s website. The names of the individuals and organizations who comprise the research team, including patient and stakeholder partners, will also be posted on PCORI’s website, as described in the Key Personnel section below.

Key Personnel

PCORI identifies key personnel as any individual who is critical to the project’s scientific development and execution in a measurable way and whose absence from the project would affect the likelihood of success.

Note the following:

- Applications can include up to two PIs.
- PIs can serve in other roles (e.g., dual-PI, co-I, or consultant) on other applications.
- If necessary, applicants must explain the rationale for including two PIs in the Leadership Plan Template.
- Consultants and personnel from collaborating organizations may be included as key personnel if they meet the definition. See the Glossary for “Consultant” and “Subcontractor” definitions.
- Project Directors, or equivalent, are considered key personnel.
- If applicable, applicants should identify the patient and other stakeholder partners, whether individuals or organizations, that will assist in conducting the project. If your project is funded, these partners will be named on the PCORI website along with the PI and the recipient organization. They may also be recognized in other PCORI communications, such as press releases, or mentioned in response to requests for information. By providing the names of the partnering individuals and organizations, you acknowledge that you have obtained any required permission or consent from the respective partners to disclose their names to PCORI and to permit PCORI to make their names publicly available. If a patient or other stakeholder partner wishes to remain anonymous, please contact us at pfa@pcori.org for additional guidance on how to recognize such partners appropriately.
If awarded, the addition or replacement of key personnel listed in the submitted application requires PCORI’s approval during contract negotiation and post-contract execution.

Milestones

Complete all required sections in the Milestones/Deliverables Template and upload as a single PDF to PCORI Online. Milestones are concrete, specific events or accomplishments that may be documented by deliverables. They include only the activities that the PCORI contract supports. Some examples of milestones include reaching specific patient accrual targets, developing a survey, commencing the intervention, and establishing project-specific databases. See Appendix 1: Example Milestones for a more complete list. If applicable, milestones may also include activities dedicated specifically to engagement, such as the recruitment of all patient/stakeholder research partners, results of annual surveys of patient/stakeholder partners, or meeting minutes of patient/stakeholder advisory councils.

Interim and final deliverables will be included in your research contract if your application is funded. Please note that PCORI reserves the right to request additional deliverables during the life of the project.

Examples of deliverables that may be required following contract execution include, but are not limited to:

- Copies of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval
- Registration of the trial on ClinicalTrials.gov
- Data and Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) meeting recommendations
- Copies of drafts of instruments, data dictionaries, educational materials, manuals, or other project deliverables
- Charts, tables, graphs, or other summaries of preliminary data
- Abstracts accepted or presentations made
- Manuscripts accepted for publication
- Meeting minutes from patient/stakeholder advisory panels, committees, or work groups
- Copies of newsletters highlighting the project from patient/stakeholder partner organizations
- Reports of plans to adopt research findings in practice
- Other documents or materials, as appropriate

**Note:** Milestones entered into the template should include specific deliverables associated with a timeline and include project objectives that will be accomplished at specific times during the proposed project. Applicants are encouraged to provide three to six milestones per six-month reporting period.

Resubmission Policy and Letter

An applicant may resubmit an application that was not funded, and that completed PCORI’s Merit Review process (i.e., the applicant received a summary statement). PCORI does not limit the number of times an applicant may resubmit.
If a full application was deemed nonresponsive and did not progress through the full Merit Review process, it is considered a new submission and requires submission of an LOI. Submitting the same application to a different program’s PFA is also considered a new submission. Each program’s PFA has different requirements; therefore, applicants should carefully review the program’s specific PFA to which they are applying.

Submitting an LOI is also a requirement of resubmissions, unless the applicant has received an Invitation to Resubmit (as described below). Resubmitted applications require completion and submission of a one-page resubmission letter. The resubmission letter is an opportunity for applicants to provide a high-level overview of how the application has been strengthened in its scientific merit and responsiveness to the current PFA. Simply responding to previous reviewers’ concerns is not sufficient; the application must be programmatically responsive and demonstrate methodological rigor and patient-centeredness. The resubmission letter will inform the merit reviewers’ understanding of the ways in which the applicant has made efforts to strengthen the application, and reviewers will evaluate the application based on its responsiveness to the PFA and the merit review criteria.

Applicants who previously submitted a dual-PI application and are now proposing a single PI application, or who wish to make a change in the previous PI team, must address the rationale for the change within the resubmission letter.

All applications are evaluated using the same Merit Review criteria found in the program-specific PFA.

**Invitation To Resubmit**

Program staff may invite applicants from previous cycles to resubmit. If invited, applicants will bypass the LOI review stage. Instead of completing and uploading an LOI Template, invited applicants are required to upload their invitation letter during the LOI process. Invited applicants are still required to complete the LOI and application fields in PCORI Online by the submission deadlines. Unless the applicant has explicit and documented approval from the program staff to alter the originally submitted study aims of the application, the invited resubmission should remain the same as in the original application.

An invitation to resubmit is not a guarantee that PCORI will select the application for funding. Invited applicants must adhere to the updated guidance in the PFA and compete with other invited and new applications.

**Research Plan Template**

Complete all required sections in the Research Plan Template and upload as a single PDF to PCORI Online. The Research Plan Template includes the following: Research Strategy, Dissemination and Implementation Potential, Replication and Reproducibility of Research and Data Sharing, Protection of Human Subjects, Consortium Contractual Agreements, References Cited, and an Appendix (optional).
Research Strategy

This component of the Research Plan (up to 20 pages) addresses the following sections: (A) Background, (B) Significance, (C) Study Design or Approach, (D) Research Team and Environment, and (E) Engagement Plan.

When completing Study Design or Approach (Section C), applicants should cite the PCORI Methodology Standards as applicable.

Adherence to PCORI Methodology Standards

Applicants are required to adhere to PCORI Methodology Standards14 and accepted best practices. PCORI Methodology Standards include 47 individual standards that fall into 11 categories. The first five categories are cross-cutting and relevant to most PCOR studies. Researchers should refer to all of these standards when planning and conducting their research projects. These categories are:

- Standards for Formulating Research Questions
- Standards Associated with Patient-Centeredness
- Standards on Data Integrity and Rigorous Analyses
- Standards for Preventing and Handling Missing Data
- Standards for Heterogeneity of Treatment Effects

Six other standards categories will be applicable to certain study designs and methods. The standards in each of these categories should be used for guidance when they are relevant to a study:

- Standards for Data Registries
- Standards for Data Networks as Research-Facilitating Infrastructures
- Standards for Causal Inference Methods
- Standards for Adaptive and Bayesian Trial Designs
- Standards for Studies of Diagnostic Tests
- Standards for Systematic Reviews

These standards should be considered minimal standards for sound science. The research should adhere to additional best practices, as appropriate, for designs, approaches, and techniques not currently included in the PCORI Methodology Standards.

As instructed in the Research Plan Template, complete the table summarizing adherence to the relevant PCORI Methodology Standards. Do not address standards that are not applicable to your study.

PCORI program staff will review relevant standards and plans for adherence with the research team during the contract negotiation phase for applications that are awarded funding.

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While completing the Research Team and Environment (Section D) component, applicants should describe the resources, facilities, collaborations, and other support available to ensure the project’s success. Include (as applicable):

- Complementary and integrated expertise and experience of the research team
- Study site selection and governance structures
- Logistical support (e.g., administrative management and oversight) and best-practices training
- Financial support (e.g., protected time for research with salary support)
- Institutional and community investment in the success of the research (e.g., access to and support of organized peer, patient, and stakeholder groups)

As part of the Research Plan, PCORI encourages all applicants to describe patient and stakeholder engagement (Section E) clearly in their applications. However, PCORI recognizes that patient engagement may not be appropriate in all cases, especially in highly technical methods projects. Please keep in mind that where it may not be appropriate to engage patients in the methodological research process, it may still be important to engage other stakeholders (data architects, clinicians, domain experts, health services researchers with different expertise than members of the research team, policy makers, etc.) in both the methodological research process and the dissemination and implementation plans. The engagement plan should be tailored to each research application’s specific aims, methods, and targeted end-users. Investigators should provide a clear and concise justification for both the patients and/or other stakeholders they intend to engage and the activities in which they intend to engage those individuals. Investigators must provide a justification if they think that it is not appropriate to engage patients or other stakeholders in a proposed research project.

**Justification of Assumptions**

PCORI specifically seeks studies that are powered to detect meaningful effects. Applicants must justify proposed sample sizes by explaining the assumptions used in all study power calculations. For example, the application should state all the necessary assumptions, such as the outcome[s] on which the power calculations are based, the estimated difference in the effect size between study arms, the standard deviation of the effect size measure, the type I and II error rates, and any other assumptions. All such estimates must be justified by referring to prior published research or preliminary data.

**Dissemination and Implementation Potential**

In this component (up to two pages), describe the potential for disseminating and implementing the results of the research in other settings.

PCORI is interested in robust research findings that can be rapidly disseminated and implemented in clinical and community practice, thus facilitating improvements in patients’ and other stakeholders’ healthcare decision making. Applicants should include a section that describes the potential for and impact of disseminating project findings and facilitating their widespread use in practice. Applicants should describe possible barriers to disseminating and implementing their work in other settings and any other study limitations that could have an impact on the usability of the findings (e.g., proprietary
issues, applicability, scalability, and appropriate settings of care). Please note that applicants are asked to describe the potential for dissemination and implementation. PCORI does not expect awardees to budget for dissemination and implementation work at this juncture. For projects that produce important findings, PCORI will consider subsequent applications for funding to support dissemination and implementation efforts through separate PFAs and other mechanisms.

PCORI encourages applicants to think creatively about how to disseminate findings, aside from publishing in scholarly journals or attending scientific meetings.

Researchers are encouraged to submit documentation of any implementation agreement with the sponsoring organization confirming that the organization will implement successful interventions on a large scale. This agreement will be viewed as a positive factor during merit review. Please include this with the Letters of Support PDF document as the last item.

**Replication and Reproducibility of Research and Data Sharing**

In this component (up to two pages), describe the ability to replicate and reproduce potentially important findings from PCORI-funded studies in other data sets, clinical settings, and populations. This assessment is essential to building confidence in the accuracy of these findings. PCORI promotes sharing of study documentation (e.g., study protocol, programming code, and data definitions) so that other researchers may replicate the findings in other populations. Propose a method for sharing data, if such activity is later requested. Applicants must describe the following requirements as they complete this template.

**Replication of research findings:** This requirement refers to supporting efforts by other researchers to replicate the research in other patient populations and data sets. It applies to all applicants, regardless of project size.

Applicants must describe a replication plan that accommodates the following:

- Provision of a complete, final study protocol describing the study population; primary and secondary hypotheses to be tested; sources and methods of measuring exposures, outcomes, and all covariates used in analyses, including data definitions, coding instructions, discussion guides for qualitative research, and the analysis plan. The protocol is usually expected to be delivered to PCORI with the 12-month progress report, and always within three months of the end of the funding period. PCORI reserves the right to share these materials with appropriate researchers, in consultation with the PI of the study.

**Reproduction of research findings:** This requirement refers to reproducing research findings in the same data set by another researcher(s) not affiliated with the applicant’s research team. The ability to reproduce important findings from the original data is critical to establishing trust in PCORI findings. Therefore, PCORI will require a data-sharing plan (described below). Although the plan is required of all such applicants, PCORI would request subsequent data sharing only after reviewing the findings and deciding that the findings warrant the expense and time of data sharing.
PCORI is committed to maximizing the utility and usability of data collected in our funded projects. We may request that awardees prepare documentation to accompany their final data sets that enables others in the research community to use the data for additional or secondary analyses, and may also request that awardees make the data and documentation available upon request.

The data-sharing plan must:

- Address data management and sharing and the methods that investigators will use to make study data sets available in a manner that is consistent with applicable privacy, confidentiality, and other legal requirements, if requested
- Propose a budget that would cover the costs of data sharing, if requested

**Note:** Do not include this plan in the proposed budget of your application. Depending on the nature, uses, and potential impact of the study findings, PCORI will consider whether incremental funding will be made available to assist investigators in complying with data-sharing requests.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

In this component (up to five pages), describe the protection of human subjects involved in your research. PCORI follows the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR Part 46), including the Common Rule. For more detailed information, please see Section 5, titled “Human Subjects Research Policy” from the Supplemental Grant Application Instructions for All Competing Applications and Progress Reports, which was issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Please refer to the Required Education of Key Personnel on the Protection of Human Subject Participants requirement as you complete this section.

**Consortium Contractual Arrangements**

In this component (up to five pages), describe the proposed research that subcontracted organizations will perform. Explain the strengths that these partners bring to the project to ensure successful submission of contract deliverables, in accordance with the milestone schedule.

Please keep the following in mind as you complete this section:

- The prime applicant is responsible for the project and must adhere to the contract’s terms and conditions. The prime applicant should negotiate its subcontracts accordingly.
- Signed subcontract agreements are not required at the time of application submission to PCORI.
- Submitting an application to PCORI signifies that programmatic and administrative personnel from your organization and from all proposed subcontract organizations involved in the project are aware of your organization’s subcontract agreement policy and are prepared to establish the necessary interorganizational agreement(s) consistent with that policy.
- If applicable, subcontract personnel should be included under Key Personnel.

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• Budget information for subcontracted organizations should be included in the Detailed Budget, Budget Summary for Entire Project, and Budget Justification.

References Cited

This component (up to 10 pages) is included in the Research Plan Template. All citations and references should follow the AMA citation style. Follow scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials used in preparing any section of the application. Citations that are publicly available in a free, online format may include URLs or PubMed ID numbers along with the full reference. References should be limited to relevant and current literature. Be concise and select only those literature references pertinent to the proposed research, so that the 10-page limit is not exceeded. Websites should be referenced in the standard URL format (i.e., http://www.pcori.org) with the date the link was last accessed.

Appendix (Optional)

This component (up to 10 pages) is included in the Research Plan Template. Applicants may provide additional materials to support the proposed study (e.g., survey instruments and interview guides). Note that reviewers are not required to review this section during merit review.

People and Places Template

Professional Profile/Biosketch and Patient/Stakeholder Partner Biosketch

These components are included in the People and Places Template. Complete a profile/biosketch section (up to five pages per individual) for each person listed as key personnel (including PI, co-I, consultant, or other significant contributors), copying the tables provided in this section as needed. Please note that you may submit a National Institutes of Health (NIH)-formatted biosketch in lieu of a PCORI-formatted biosketch. Patient or other stakeholder partners serving as key personnel may choose to fill out a Patient/Stakeholder Partner Biosketch in lieu of the Professional Profile/Biosketch. At a minimum, each profile must include the person’s name, title, and degree(s). Each profile or biosketch may be no more than five pages. PCORI is especially interested to learn how each individual’s previous experience, past performance, and training in the field of PCOR have prepared him or her to conduct this research. The backgrounds, relevant experiences, and roles of patient and other stakeholder partners should also be described.

Applicants should demonstrate that the study team’s experience, leadership approach, governance, and organizational structure are appropriate for the project and will aid in achieving the project goals.

Project Performance Site(s) and Resources

This component (up to 15 pages) is included in the People and Places Template. Demonstrate in detail that the proposed facilities have the appropriate resources required to conduct the project as planned, within budget, and on time.

Applicants should provide a description of the facilities they will use during the project, including capacity, capability, characteristics, proximity, and availability to the project.
Leadership Plan (required if proposing a dual-PI application)

Depending on the nature of the proposed study, a collaborative and multidisciplinary team may be required. PCORI permits applicants to name a maximum of two PIs within an application. The PIs may be from the same or different institutions. Each PI is accountable and responsible for the conduct of the award and ensuring all awarded milestones, deliverables, and reports are completed in accordance with the award terms and conditions.

If proposing a dual-PI application, one PI must be designated as the Contact PI. The Contact PI must be employed by the applicant institution and listed first within the application. Although PCORI will recognize both PIs as such within the award contact and through PCORI publications, the Contact PI is responsible for communications between the PIs and PCORI, to include coordinating meetings with PCORI staff.

Applicants must include a Leadership Plan as the first section of the People and Places Template. Within five pages, the Leadership Plan must (1) Describe the governance and organizational structure of the leadership team and the research project; (2) Delineate the administrative, technical, scientific, and engagement responsibilities for each PI; (3) Discuss communication plans and the process for making decisions on scientific and engagement direction; and (4) Describe the procedure for resolving conflicts.

Note: Only the Contact PI may submit the application to PCORI. PCORI will not review the same application by another institution or another PI.

Budget Template

Complete all required sections, including the Peer Review Budget section, and upload the Budget Template and Budget Justification to PCORI Online as a single PDF. Do not upload separate budget files for subcontractors; include all subcontractor budget files within the prime applicant’s PDF budget upload.

Detailed Research Project Budget for Each Year of the Research Project Period

Complete a Detailed Budget for each year of the project for the prime applicant and any subcontractor(s) proposed in the application. For example, if the study lasts two years, the prime applicant must complete a Detailed Budget for Year One and for Year Two. The subcontractor should follow the same process and complete a Detailed Budget for each year of the proposed study.

All personnel information should be entered in the Personnel tab corresponding to that year in the Budget Template. The applicant may add additional rows for personnel as needed. Following the example of a two-year study, applicants may delete the unused Year Three–Five Detailed Budget tabs. However, applicants are not permitted to add additional years. Maximum project periods are stated in each PFA. Note the following:

A. Personnel Costs
Personnel Costs: These include the base salary for each scientific and technical staff member, employee patient or stakeholder partner, or other personnel on your project that is not accounted for in Section B: Consultant Costs. Provide a clear distinction between individuals who are considered Key Personnel and those considered Other Personnel.

PCORI will reimburse personnel costs that are consistent with and do not exceed what the applicant would normally pay under its own policy. PCORI may request salary verification during the contract activation process. Such compensation may include salaries and fringe benefits. See Appendix 2: Allowable and Unallowable Costs for more information.

Salaries include wages earned by an employee, and fringe benefits may include insurance and retirement plans. Provide documentation to support the fringe benefits with the Budget Justification.

Level of Effort: Personnel contributing to a PCORI-funded research project are expected to monitor their total percent effort across all of their active funding, so it does not exceed 100 percent. Before submitting the application to PCORI, the AO must certify that individual personnel will not exceed 100 percent effort, if funded. Effort must be reported by the percentage of time over the course of the project year. If salary support is not being requested, use $0 for the base salary.

All personnel dedicating effort to the project should be listed on the personnel budget with their level of effort, even if they are not requesting salary support. Please list the base salary for each person in the Budget Justification and Detailed Budget. Describe in the Budget Justification detail the individual's specific functions. Provide an explanation of how the role supports the project aims and note any overlap in job functions.

Salary Cap: The PCORI base salary cap for personnel is $200,000 annualized per individual, per year, exclusive of fringe benefits. An individual who earns less than $200,000 should use his or her actual base salary to calculate personnel costs. An individual with a full-time employee base salary of more than $200,000 must use $200,000 as the base salary rate in determining the amount of salary and time to charge to the project.

Fringe Benefits: These costs are calculated based on the institution’s own policy. In the budget upload, following the Budget Justification, applicants must provide a verification of the fringe benefit rate policy for the prime organization.

Note: Personnel costs must account for the level of effort required to initiate and complete the mandated Peer Review Process. See the Detailed Peer Review Budget for Peer Review-Related Costs section for additional instructions.

B. Consultant Costs

Consultant costs apply to those individuals who are not employees of the applicant organization or under a subcontract agreement as members of the contracted staff.

Payments to nonemployee patient and stakeholder representatives should be included in the budget as consultant costs.
• Provide the total cost of consultant(s), as well as names, expected number of hours, and hourly rate(s).
• Include the daily consultant fee, travel expenses, nature of the consulting effort, and why the proposed project requires consultants. Note any overlap in duties with personnel.
• Consultant costs must be reasonable and justified within the Budget Justification.
• Include a letter of support from each consultant, verifying the work to be performed and how the negotiated rate was established. See the Letters of Support section for more information.

C. Supply Costs

• Supplies must be directly allocable and allowable to the proposed project and not part of general or administrative use. Supplies are consumable items that are used on a regular basis or other tangible items that do not meet the definition of equipment. Include the category of supplies needed and the cost for each.
• Tangible items with per-unit costs of $5,000 or more are considered equipment and cannot be accounted for under this category.
• Indicate general categories such as mailings, printing, lab, and equipment with less than a $5,000-per-unit cost. Provide detailed explanations for all costs exceeding $1,000 in the Budget Justification.
• For all supply costs, provide computations for how applicants arrived at the specific number.

Note: PCORI considers computers, tablets, docking stations, mobile data and protection plans, and software to be general office supplies that are not allowable as direct-cost charges. If these items are proposed as essential for performing the research project, the following must be provided in the Budget Justification:

○ Detailed explanation of why purchasing these items is necessary to complete the proposed research project
○ Statement verifying that the requested items are not currently available for the PI’s use
○ Statement assuring that the items will be purchased in accordance with applicable cost principles

*Items purchased under PCORI-funded projects are not to be used as incentives to recruit or retain graduate students or any other project personnel.*

D. Travel Costs

• Travel may include any domestic or international travel by project personnel or consultants directly related to, and necessary for, the project and within the limits explained below. PCORI uses the Federal Travel Regulations guidelines for per diem and other reimbursements.
• Travel costs should be itemized per trip and described as either scientific or programmatic travel, as outlined below:
o Scientific travel includes travel to present at conferences, symposiums, and similar events. Scientific travel is capped at $10,000 over the life of the project period.
  - This cap is inclusive of the prime and all subcontractor scientific travel costs.
o Programmatic travel includes travel needed to conduct the project (e.g., focus groups, project team meetings, and data collection). PCORI closely reviews all travel costs for reasonableness.
o Airline or rail costs cannot exceed the customary standard commercial fare (coach or equivalent) or the lowest commercial discount fare. PCORI will not compensate upgrades.

- For each travel category (scientific and programmatic), include the number of trips and a brief description of the trips, to include the number of people traveling and dates or duration of the stay.
- In the Budget Justification, applicants must provide additional detail to explain the basis for the costs listed and describe how the travel is directly related to the proposed research project and necessary for achieving programmatic objectives.

E. Other Expenses

- Indicate and include general categories such as printing, publication, illustration costs, and non-consulting service contracts, when applicable.
- Use this section to include direct costs that cannot be accounted for in other budget categories. For example, these costs may include warranties, computer services, data warehousing, or participant incentives.
- In the space provided, include a detailed explanation for items that exceed $1,000. Applicants must provide additional detail for each of these costs in the Budget Justification.

F. Equipment Costs

- Equipment costs include tangible items that have a per-unit cost of $5,000 or more and a useful life greater than one year.
- Up to three quotes for each item of proposed equipment must be included with the Budget Justification.
- Costs must be reasonable and necessary for the project.

Note: Title to equipment vests with the recipient organization. PCORI, at its discretion, may require applicants to share or transfer equipment to other PCORI-funded projects within the recipient organization. Equipment disposition must be approved by PCORI.

G. Subcontractor Costs

- This category includes all consortium and contractual costs. The prime awardee must issue a subcontract agreement to a collaborator if the criteria listed below are met:
  - The subcontractor personnel’s effort on the project is calculated as part of his or her “professional time” for his or her employer organization.
The subcontractor will be using significant resources (e.g., office space, supplies, computer, and personnel) at his or her own organization when working on the PCORI-funded project.

- State in the Budget Justification why each subcontractor was selected. Provide detail on their specific role and the aim or deliverable they will be supporting on the project.
- Subcontractors must adhere to all PCORI budget guidelines, including allowable and unallowable costs.

**H. Indirect Costs**

- PCORI limits the total indirect costs to 40 percent of personnel, consultant costs, travel, supplies, other expenses; and $25,000 of all combined subcontractor costs.
- Applicants who do not have a federally negotiated or independently audited indirect cost rate may assess up to 10 percent indirect costs, to be noted in the Budget Justification.
- Foreign applicants are eligible for no more than 10 percent indirect costs.

A copy of the prime applicant’s federally negotiated or independently audited indirect cost rate letter must be submitted with the application. Include these copies in a single file with the Budget Justification.

In the event that an indirect cost rate agreement is more restrictive than that of PCORI’s accepted indirect cost application, PCORI will allow the applicant to use the less-restrictive rule when calculating indirect costs on submitted budget categories.

**Detailed Peer Review Budget for Peer Review-Related Costs**

The detailed Peer Review Budget must include costs related to the Peer Review Process. Please complete a Detailed Budget for the Peer Review Process. (Refer to the Peer Review Budget tab in the Detailed Budget Template.) Please note that the Total Budget will include the Peer Review Budget and the Research Project Budget when determining compliance with the Maximum Project Budget in the PFA.

- The Peer Review Budget must comply with the Research Project Budget guidelines and applicable restrictions, including the Salary Cap.
- Costs associated with the Peer Review Process are limited to personnel, consultants, and subcontractors.
- A Budget Justification must be included for the Peer Review Budget.
- The Budget Summary must include the Peer Review Budget.
- The PI has full discretion in identifying peer review support personnel.
- The PI must dedicate measurable effort in support of the Peer Review Process.
- Applicants must identify the peer review support staff role within the budget at the time of submission.
Budget Summary for Entire Project

Complete a Budget Summary for the Research Project Budget and Peer Review Budget for the prime applicant and each subcontracted organization. See Appendix 2: Allowable and Unallowable Costs to review acceptable and unacceptable uses of PCORI funding.

Budget Justification

Complete a Budget Justification 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. Provide sufficient detail to explain the basis for costs and the reason the costs are necessary to the project.

Provide detail to explain the basis for travel costs and describe how the travel is directly related to the proposed research and necessary for achieving programmatic objectives.

Describe in detail the specific role and tasks each research team member will be performing and the impact on the project plan. PCORI will evaluate each member’s contribution as listed in the Budget Justification to validate meaningful contribution and whether or not there is overlap in responsibilities.

Specify any other sources of funding, currently available or anticipated, to support the proposed research project. Include funding amounts and the period during which they will be available. Use continuation pages as needed.

Letters of Support

Save all letters of support as a single PDF file and upload to PCORI Online, using the Letters of Support Table as the first page of the file. Follow the guidance below and in the table template to enable easy reference for merit reviewers and PCORI staff. Reviewers are asked to consider the letters of support as outlined in the template and in this guidance. Failure to assemble the letters properly may result in the reviewers missing key information. If this occurs, PCORI will not send the application for re-review because it will be deemed an error in application assembly, not an error in review.

All letters of support should be addressed to the PI and demonstrate the commitment of key personnel and supporting organizations (e.g., dual-PIs, co-Is, consultants, patient and stakeholder partners, and stakeholder organizations) to the proposed project. Letters of support are not required for personnel who are not contributing in a substantive, measurable way to the project’s scientific development or execution. Letters of support should reflect clearly the involvement and material contribution to be provided by the signatory parties and are meant to confirm the commitment of collaboration.

PCORI may contact any individuals or organizations included in the letters of support with questions or to confirm support as described in the letters.

Letters of support should be organized as follows:
• **Letters of Organizational Support:** Provide a letter (or letters, if applicable), signed by the Department Chair or appropriate organizational official, which confirms the institutional support of the proposed project, space to conduct the research, equipment, and other resources available for the project, including staff. PCORI also strongly encourages that you provide a letter from the department or organization leadership affirming support to disseminate research findings that are appropriate and warranted for implementation.

• **Letters of Collaboration:** Provide a signed letter from each collaborating individual or organization that will demonstrate that the PI has the support or resources necessary for the proposed work. Letters of support from patient and stakeholder partners should describe clearly the origin of the study topic and the role of the partners in defining the question, outcomes, comparators, goals and outcomes, and so on. Also strongly encouraged are letters from patient or stakeholder partners or partnering organizations affirming support to disseminate and implement research findings that are germane and warranted for implementation. Please include a letter of support for all consultants verifying the work to be performed and their negotiated rate.

• **Letters Confirming Access to Patient Populations, Data Sets, or Additional Resources:** If the proposed Research Plan involves access to patient populations, data sets, or additional resources, include a letter of support, signed by the person with approval authority, which confirms such access. If access cannot be confirmed at the time of contract negotiation, PCORI reserves the right to withhold funding until the PI has demonstrated support for and access to the relevant population(s) and resources.

List all letters on the table and include the page number on which the letter can be found in the single PDF file.

**VI. Additional Requirements**

Awardees are required to comply with the following requirements:

**Required Education of Key Personnel on the Protection of Human Subject Participants**

PCORI requires all applicants to adhere to the NIH policy on education in the protection of human subject participants in the conduct of research. This applies to all individuals listed as Key Personnel in the application. The policy and FAQs are available on the NIH website.¹⁶

**PCORI Public Access Policy**

PCORI requires all awardees to adhere strictly to PCORI’s publication policies, which will be shared with awardees within the research contract.

Registering Research Projects

PIs are required to use the following naming convention “PCORI-PCORI application number” (e.g., PCORI-XXXX-XXXX). Clinical trials must be registered before enrollment of the first patient. All trials that meet the definition on the NIH database17 (see “Data Element Definitions”) are required to register.

Funded clinical trials or observational outcomes studies must be registered at ClinicalTrials.gov.

Funded evidence-synthesis studies must be registered at PROSPERO.18 Funded patient registries must be registered at RoPR19 (Registry of Patient Registries).

Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information

DHHS issued a final modification to the Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information, the “Privacy Rule,” on August 14, 2002. The Privacy Rule is a federal regulation under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 that governs the protection of individually identifiable health information and is administered and enforced by the DHHS Office for Civil Rights.

Decisions about the applicability and implementation of the Privacy Rule reside with the researcher and his or her institution. The Office for Civil Rights20 provides information on the Privacy Rule, including a complete Regulation Text and a set of decision tools on “Am I a covered entity?” Information on the impact of the HIPAA Privacy Rule on NIH processes involving the review, funding, and progress monitoring of grants, cooperative agreements, and research contracts is available at NIH.21

Award Funding Conditions

At any time during the contract, PCORI reserves the right to discontinue funding for awardees that fail to meet the mutually agreed-upon milestones. Applicants’ proposed milestones will be finalized in contract negotiations and prior to execution. Please see PCORI’s Standard Contract Template for more information.

Co-Funding

PCORI partners with various other research organizations to leverage additional funds for some of its programs. If you currently have a funded project and would like to seek PCORI funding to add a new aim to the study that advances PCORI funding objectives, you may submit an application. We recommend that you speak with a Program Officer in advance.

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17 Available at https://www.clinicaltrials.gov/.
18 Available at http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO/.
19 Available at https://patientregistry.ahrq.gov/.
Note: PCORI will not fund a project already funded through another funding entity. By submitting the application to PCORI, the AO is certifying that there is no overlap in funding at the time of submission. Prior to receiving a PCORI contract, awardees must disclose all current and pending support.

Dissemination and Data Sharing

PCORI is committed to publishing and disseminating all information and materials developed using PCORI funding, in accordance with its authorizing legislation. All recipients of PCORI contracts must agree to these principles and take steps to facilitate data availability.
VII. Appendix 1: Example Milestones

Milestones are significant events, tasks, or outcomes that may be documented by deliverables. The completion of each milestone is intended to mark progress toward the project goals and ensure that the project is on schedule and likely to be completed within the contract period. Below is a list of milestone examples for reference as you complete this section of your application:

- IRB approval
- Documentation of adherence to the PCORI Methodology Standards
- Recommendations from DSMB meetings every six months
- Determination of the appropriate study database and registration (e.g., ClinicalTrials.gov, RoPR)
- Start of recruitment (indicate target total)
- Completion of 25 percent of recruitment (indicate the number)
- Completion of 50 percent of recruitment (indicate the number)
- Completion of 75 percent of recruitment (indicate the number)
- Completion of recruitment (indicate the number)
- Start of follow-up data collection. (If multiple follow-up time points are included in the study protocol, create a separate milestone for each data collection time point.)
- Completion of 25 percent of follow-up data collection. (If multiple follow-up time points are included in the study protocol, create a separate milestone for each data collection time point.)
- Completion of 50 percent of follow-up data collection. (If multiple follow-up time points are included in the study protocol, create a separate milestone for each data collection time point.)
- Completion of 75 percent of follow-up data collection. (If multiple follow-up time points are included in the study protocol, create a separate milestone for each data collection time point.)
- Completion of follow-up data collection. (If multiple follow-up time points are included in the study protocol, create a separate milestone for each data collection time point.)
- Intervention materials complete
- Final study protocol
- Primary completion date. (If applicable; the primary completion date is the date that the final subject [or participant] was examined or received an intervention for the purposes of final data collection for the primary outcome. The primary completion date is defined in Section 801 of the Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act of 2007.)
- Notification of posting final protocol on ClinicalTrials.gov
- Conduct baseline assessments or measurements
- Start follow-up assessments or measurements
- Complete follow-up assessments or measurements
- Submit results to ClinicalTrials.gov, as applicable
- Manuscript submission or notification of publication
- Data sets, analytic data sets, and codebook
- Copies of published manuscripts
- Engagement updates, every six months, noting specific engagement activities that patients and/or other stakeholders participated in during the reporting time period; examples of
engagement activities include describing how patients and/or other stakeholders were involved in developing the intervention materials and describing patient and stakeholder involvement and contribution in the early stages of the research project, such as enrollment of research participants, baseline assessments, and the process evaluation component.

At the Program Officer’s discretion, milestones listed above may be deemed not appropriate or additional reporting, such as monthly recruitment numbers, may be required.
VIII. Appendix 2: Allowable and Unallowable Costs

Acceptable uses of PCORI research contract funds are those that directly support the proposed research project, including collecting and analyzing data, and obtaining relevant data sets. Because PCORI primarily funds CER, the research projects generally involve the comparison of clinical interventions or strategies that are considered to be accepted standard of care and are not experimental or investigational. As a result, when developing proposed Detailed Budgets, it is important for funding applicants to think carefully about which costs derive from, and directly support, the research project, as opposed to those costs that would otherwise be incurred in the course of providing the clinical care and health-related costs around which the research project is organized.

Allowable costs (i.e., those costs that can be included in a proposed Detailed Budget when applying for a PCORI Funding Award and charged to the award) may include the following costs that derive from and directly support the research project:

- Salaries and fringe benefits for study investigators and other research project staff (including engaged patient and stakeholder research study partners) related to their percentage of effort spent on conducting the research project. (Such costs should not include personnel who deliver patient care as a component of their participation in the research project.)
- Consultant fees
- Travel for mandatory investigator meetings
- Travel that is otherwise necessary for conducting the research project
- Supplies
- Equipment
- Subcontracts
- Expenses related to conducting engagement activities with patients and/or other stakeholders
- Other direct research expenses
- Indirect costs

A funding applicant must specifically request costs related to conducting the research project through itemization on the Detailed Budget. PCORI will consider this request in the course of making an award. The following principles and requirements generally apply to PCORI’s evaluation of the proposed budget and determination of allowable costs, and should guide applicants in preparing their Detailed Budgets:

- Typically, IRB fees are included in an organization's indirect cost pool. However, PCORI will allow this expense as a direct cost if the costs are not included as part of the indirect cost rate. By submitting the application, the PI and AO certify that their institution treats IRB fees as direct costs, and the fee is allocable to the study. IRB fees are subject to audit.
- In general, PCORI will not cover costs for study interventions that constitute the procedures, treatments, interventions, or other standard clinical care (“patient care”) that is or are being proposed for comparison in the research project (“patient care costs”). The host healthcare delivery system, third-party payer, product manufacturer, developer of the intervention, or other interested party should cover the patient care costs.
• The willingness of one or more stakeholder groups to cover patient care costs incurred during the research project, even when one of the comparators is not currently directly covered by insurance, will be taken as a strong endorsement of the research project by the stakeholder group. Such commitments also provide an indication that the stakeholder groups will use the research study's findings. (Such support by a stakeholder group should be discussed in the application.)
• Except for specific permission in exceptional circumstances, PCORI will not cover patient care costs.
• PCORI may consider coverage of the copayment or coinsurance costs of participating study subjects when necessary to preserve blinding in a study or to ensure access to the study for vulnerable populations.
• PCORI will generally cover costs for ancillary tasks necessary to implement or monitor patient care as part of conducting the research project. Examples include costs for obtaining informed consent to participate in the research project; collecting data pursuant to the research protocol; or collecting and monitoring study subject data that would not normally be performed in the course of patients receiving the patient care evaluated in the research project.

PCORI will review all proposed costs. Costs must be deemed allowable, allocable, and directly necessary for the successful execution of the proposed research project. A notification of pending award is subject to budgetary review and successful contract negotiation. The actual award amount may vary.

PCORI considers computers, tablets, docking stations, mobile data and protection plans, laboratory and
office furnishings, and software to be general office supplies that are not allowable as direct-cost charges.
**IX. Appendix 3: Administrative Actions**

Applicants who fail to submit required documents or adhere to administrative requirements may be rejected from the merit review process. The chart below explains the reasons for rejection, modification, and appended requests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Automatic Rejection</th>
<th>Modification by PCORI</th>
<th>Appended upon PCORI’s Request*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An application or LOI will be automatically rejected if it:</td>
<td>PCORI will modify an application by removing all pages that exceed stated limits for the following components:</td>
<td>Unless automatically rejected or modified, PCORI may request that the applicant submit missing documents or correct noncompliant documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exceeds the specified page limit</td>
<td>• Resubmission Letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exceeds the specified period of performance outlined in the PFA</td>
<td>• Research Strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exceeds the maximum budget specified in the PFA</td>
<td>• Dissemination and Implementation Potential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has adjusted margins or font size</td>
<td>• Reproducibility and Transparency of Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does not include or has an incomplete Research Strategy</td>
<td>• Protection of Human Subjects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* PCORI will not accept documents submitted more than one business day after initial request.