Special PCORI Funding Announcement

Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Award Special Cycle: Building Capacity for PCOR/CER for Topics Related to COVID-19

Published: March 1, 2021

This PCORI Funding Announcement (PFA) applies to the proposal deadline of May 24, 2021, at 5 pm ET. Submission instructions, templates, and other resources are available at https://www.pcori.org/funding-opportunities/announcement/engagement-award-special-cycle-building-capacity-PCOR-CER-COVID19-2021
About PCORI

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (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, caregivers, clinicians, policy makers, and other healthcare system stakeholders 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” and by promoting the dissemination and uptake of this evidence.

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 and other stakeholders.

Key Information for the Engagement Awards Special Cycle 2021:

- Applicants should consider alternative plans for any convening activities within the project, should an in-person meeting not be feasible. Please consult PCORI’s Applicant and Awardee FAQs Related to COVID-19 to ensure your proposed project adheres to PCORI’s guidance related to applicant pre-award concerns.

- PCORI is aware that there is an evolving context around the COVID-19 pandemic. We are committed to working with awardees to adapt projects and processes to the evolving context during this time so that deliverables are implemented fully as per the executed contract.
## Overview

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Published</th>
<th>March 1, 2021</th>
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<tr>
<td>Full Proposal Deadline</td>
<td>May 24, 2021 by 5 pm ET</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full proposals will be screened for responsiveness to this PFA and for fit to program goals. Notification of decision will occur within 10 weeks of the submission deadline. <strong>Note:</strong> A Letter of Intent (LOI) is not required for this PFA.</td>
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<td>Key Dates</td>
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<td>Online System Opens:</td>
<td>March 1, 2021</td>
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<td>Applicant Webinar:</td>
<td>Available March 2, 2021 (Recorded)</td>
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<td>Applicant Office Hours (Session 1):</td>
<td>March 8, 2021, 12:00-12:30 pm ET</td>
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<td>Applicant Office Hours (Session 2):</td>
<td>March 22, 2021, 12:00-12:30 pm ET</td>
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<td>Applicant Office Hours (Session 3):</td>
<td>April 12, 2021, 12:00-1:00 pm ET</td>
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<td>Application Deadline:</td>
<td>May 24, 2021 by 5 pm ET</td>
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<td>Application Status Notification:</td>
<td>Within 10 weeks of application deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earliest Project Start Date:</td>
<td>September 1, 2021, October 1, 2021, or November 1, 2021</td>
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<td>Announcement Type</td>
<td>Research Support Award</td>
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<td>Total Costs</td>
<td>A research support—not research—special funding opportunity, for projects up to 18 months in duration and up to $200,000 in total costs. The length of the project period and budget amount must be justified by the level of activity that will occur during the project and all projects must be at least 12 months in duration. The maximum budget includes all direct and indirect costs. At the time of contract execution, PCORI sets aside all the funds associated with an awarded project to be made available throughout the contract’s period of performance. This PFA does not consider exceptions to the budget. PCORI will not review submissions exceeding the stated maximum budget.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximum Project Period</td>
<td>18 Months</td>
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<tr>
<td>This PFA does not consider exceptions to period-of-performance limits. PCORI will not review submissions exceeding the stated period of performance.</td>
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<td>Funds Available Up To</td>
<td>PCORI plans to award up to $25 million in fiscal year 2021 as part of the Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Awards.</td>
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<td>Eligibility</td>
<td>Applications may be submitted by any private-sector organization, including any nonprofit or for-profit organization; any public-sector organization, including any university or college hospital or healthcare system; or any unit of local, state, or federal government. The Internal Revenue Service must recognize all US applicant organizations. Organizations may submit multiple funding applications. Individuals are not permitted to apply. Nondomestic components of organizations based in the United States and foreign organizations may apply, as long as there is demonstrable benefit to the US healthcare system and US efforts in the area of patient-centered research can be shown clearly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review Criteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Program Fit</td>
<td>4. Patient and Stakeholder Engagement Plan &amp; Collaborators</td>
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<td>2. Project Plan and Timeline</td>
<td>5. Past Performance</td>
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Contact Us

Programmatic Inquiries: ea@pcori.org or phone (202-370-9312)

PCORI will respond within three business days. However, we cannot guarantee that all questions will be addressed three business days prior to an application deadline. Applicants are asked to plan accordingly. It is the applicant’s responsibility to submit the application on or before the stated deadline.

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I. Introduction

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) plans to award up to $25 million in fiscal year 2021 as part of the Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Awards. These awards are for research support projects. This program does not fund research studies.

The Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Awards support projects that encourage active, meaningful involvement of patients, caregivers, clinicians, and other healthcare stakeholders as integral members of the patient-centered outcomes research/comparative clinical effectiveness research (PCOR/CER) enterprise.

This Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Awards Special Cycle Funding Announcement—Building Capacity for PCOR/CER for Topics Related to COVID-19 is a research support—not research—special funding opportunity for projects up to 18 months in duration and up to $200,000 in total costs. The length of the project period and budget amount must be justified by the level of activity that will occur during the project and all projects must be at least 12 months in duration.

This special funding opportunity will support projects that enable organizations and communities to build their capacity and skills to participate across all phases of the PCOR/CER process on topics that address health outcomes related to COVID-19. Projects will also provide an understanding of the impact of stakeholder engagement strategies within different settings and stakeholder groups focused on this special area of interest.

In the context of the Engagement Awards program, capacity building to support research refers to the following types of projects:

- Projects that focus on building the knowledge, competencies, and abilities of patients and other stakeholders to be meaningful partners in PCOR/CER with researchers throughout the research process, from topic selection through design and conduct of research to dissemination or implementation of results.
- Projects that strengthen the skills of researchers to be better partners with patients and other stakeholders involved in PCOR/CER.
- Projects that support the expansion of use or adoption of existing engagement tools and resources to build capacity for PCOR/CER in a new population or geographic area.

This is an opportunity to explore and address the urgent and unique needs to build capacity for stakeholder engagement in PCOR/CER specifically related to:

- Long-term effects of post-acute COVID-19;
- Impact of COVID-19 on disproportionately affected populations;
- Impact of COVID-19 on social isolation and loneliness (mental health and well-being); and
Engaging, educating, and promoting informed decision making around COVID-19 vaccines.

Other relevant topics related to COVID-19 health outcomes with appropriate justification will also be considered.

II. General Requirements for Engagement Awards

This section includes language that is specific to PCORI’s requirements for programmatic responsiveness under this funding announcement. Applicants should use this section as guidance when preparing their full proposals. For information related to administrative and technical requirements for application submission, please consult the Engagement Award Submission Instructions for Special Cycle 2021.

Engagement Award Priorities

The Engagement Award program supports PCORI’s Engagement Imperative—defined in our Strategic Plan—and provides a platform to increase engagement in research, that is, the meaningful involvement of patients, caregivers, clinicians, and other healthcare stakeholders throughout the research process. We expect projects selected for an Engagement Award to result in tools and resources that may be useful to other awardees for increasing patient and/or other stakeholder engagement in PCOR/CER, PCORI, and the broader PCOR community. We are committed to using and broadly sharing this information. Please see the PCORI Engagement Tool and Resource Repository for examples of what this can look like.

Categories of Nonresponsiveness

Applications will be considered nonresponsive for an Engagement Award if they propose:

- Projects solely intended to increase patient engagement in health care or healthcare systems rather than healthcare research
- Projects to design or test healthcare interventions
- Activities that involve the use of a drug or medical device
- Development of clinical practice guidelines, care protocols, or decision support tools
- Development of coverage, payment, or policy recommendations or guidelines
- Projects related to quality measures, quality improvement, or engagement around quality measures
- Projects to recruit and enroll patients for clinical trials
- Projects that only involve patients as subjects (individuals enrolled into a study as participants)
- Research studies including randomized controlled trials, observational studies, and pragmatic clinical studies
- Development or maintenance of a registry, or recruitment to participate in a registry
- Projects designed solely to validate tools or instruments not created through a PCORI-funded project
- Writing research proposals or completing grant applications, grantmaking
- Projects focused solely on social determinants of health, with no focus on patient-centered outcomes research/comparative clinical effectiveness research (PCOR/CER)
- Planning for dissemination or dissemination initiatives without including PCORI-funded research or related products
- Implementation of PCORI findings in a clinical practice setting (PCORI funds dedicated implementation efforts through the Limited PCORI Funding Announcement: Implementation of PCORI-Funded Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Results)
- Projects or meetings without a clear focus on patient-centered outcomes research/comparative clinical effectiveness research (PCOR/CER)

Avoiding Redundancy

PCORI encourages potential applicants to review funded projects at pcori.org. We intend to balance our funded portfolio to achieve synergy and avoid redundancy where possible.

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

PCORI requires that all applicants adhere to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) policy on education in the protection of human subject participants. This applies to all individuals listed as key personnel in the application. The policy and FAQs are available on the NIH website.

III. Special Cycle: Building Capacity for PCOR/CER for Topics Related to COVID-19

The Engagement Award program is now accepting full proposals for the Special Cycle: Building Capacity for PCOR/CER for Topics Related to COVID-19, a research support—not research—special funding opportunity for projects up to 18 months in duration and up to $200,000 in total costs. The length of the project period and budget amount must be justified by the level of activity that will occur during the project and all projects must be at least 12 months in duration.

Overview of Building Capacity for PCOR/CER

This Engagement Award funding announcement offers an opportunity for organizations and community groups to build capacity and skills for patient-centered outcomes research and comparative clinical effectiveness research (PCOR/CER), as well as understand the impact of stakeholder engagement within different settings and stakeholder groups focused on this special area of interest.
In the context of the Engagement Awards program, capacity building to support research refers to the following types of projects:

- Projects that support organizations with strong ties to patients, caregivers, clinicians, and/or other stakeholders who have a connection to, expertise in, or lived experience related to the focus area to equip them to engage as partners in PCOR/CER. These projects will focus on building the knowledge, competencies, and abilities of their community to be meaningful partners with researchers throughout the research process from topic selection through design and conduct of research to dissemination or implementation of results.

- Activities might include, but are not limited to:
  - Educating and training stakeholders on the fundamentals of PCOR/CER; establishing a sustainable collaborative or learning community; engaging stakeholders to identify important patient-centered outcomes, prioritize PCOR/CER topics or themes, and/or develop a research agenda; capturing stakeholder perspectives on emerging PCOR/CER needs and barriers/facilitators to patient-centered research.
    - Applicants may wish to consider utilizing PCORI’s Research Fundamentals, a free, on-demand, comprehensive training that offers different ways to learn about the health research process and be involved in patient-centered outcomes research.
  - Multi-stakeholder convenings, meetings, and conferences that include patients, caregivers, researchers, clinicians, purchasers, payers, health system leaders, and other stakeholders.
  - Convenings designed with the active involvement of patient and community groups and organizations to bring diverse stakeholders together around a central focus or theme that unifies stakeholders.
  - Convenings that include one or more of the following priority/focus areas: (a) facilitating discussion around patient-centered research design and development of PCOR, (b) sharing engagement methods, and/or (c) dissemination of research findings.

- Projects that strengthen the skills of researchers to be better partners with patients and other stakeholders involved in PCOR/CER.
  - Applicants must clearly explain how the capacity that is developed through an award will be applied to existing or planned PCOR/CER partnership opportunities.

- Projects that support the expansion of use or adoption of existing engagement tools and resources whenever possible, rather than develop new products and tools. Projects may implement available tools, processes, or programs, alone or in combination, in a new population or geographic area—for example, a new network of clinicians, patient advocates, and academic researchers.
If this project is using a PCORI-funded engagement tool/resource, applicants should identify the existing engagement tool/resource that this project will be scaling or adopting by listing the: (a) Tool Name, (b) Project Title, (c) Project Lead Name, (d) URL to project page. Applicants should anticipate seeking a letter of support from the tool/resource originator should a full application be invited.

Applicants should identify and describe all tools/trainings/programs that will be used as part of the project, as well as share the evidence base for the resources that will be used.

**Funding Priorities for Special Cycle: COVID-19**

This special funding opportunity will support projects that enable organizations and communities to develop their capacity and skills to participate across all phases of the PCOR/CER process, as described above, on topics uniquely related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an opportunity to explore and address the urgent need to build capacity for stakeholder engagement in PCOR/CER specifically related to:

- Long-term symptoms of post-acute COVID-19;
- Impact of COVID-19 on disproportionately affected populations;
- Impact of COVID-19 on social isolation and loneliness (mental health and well-being); and
- Engaging, educating, and promoting informed decision making around the COVID-19 vaccine.

Other relevant topics related to COVID-19 health outcomes with appropriate justification will also be considered.

Types of projects under this funding announcement may include, but are not limited to:

- Projects that capture and communicate emerging research needs identified by stakeholders, with emphasis on the PCOR/CER needs of patients, frontline workers, and other communities facing the COVID-19 pandemic, including, but not limited to, clinicians, policy makers, hospitals, and health systems.
- Projects that engage communities to identify barriers and facilitators related to making informed decisions and/or increasing awareness and education around the COVID-19 vaccines.
- Projects that identify important patient-centered outcomes of those experiencing long-term effects of post-acute COVID-19.
- Projects that engage stakeholders and build capacity to participate in PCOR/CER related to telehealth or other technology-enhanced interventions and strategies.
- Projects that engage stakeholders around social emotional health and well-being to prioritize PCOR/CER topics during the COVID-19 pandemic including social isolation and loneliness.
We expect that projects selected for an Engagement Award will further PCORI’s goals of promoting the relevance of research to target audiences and the uptake of research results by end users. We are committed to using and sharing successful approaches.

The information and learnings generated by Engagement Award projects must be generalizable; they must be of interest or use not just to the applicant organizations but to others doing related work. The learnings and information will be made public so they can have a broader impact. Please see the PCORI Engagement Tool and Resource Repository for examples of what this can look like.

Submiting a Successful Application

Successful applications will include:

- **Applicants should consider alternative plans for any convening activities within the project, should an in-person meeting not be feasible. Please consult PCORI’s Applicant and Awardee FAQs Related to COVID-19 to ensure your proposed project adheres to PCORI’s guidance related to applicant pre-award concerns.**
  
  o PCORI is aware that there is an evolving context around the COVID-19 pandemic. We are committed to working with awardees to adapt projects and processes to the evolving context during this time so that deliverables are implemented fully as per the executed contract.

- Rationale that there is a need for additional patient and/or stakeholder capacity to participate in COVID-19-related PCOR/CER with a clear and direct link to participation in research opportunities.

- Applicants are encouraged to provide actionable findings as early in the project period as is feasible in the form of a submitted deliverable.

- The intended impact of the proposed project.

- The organization’s relationship to the population and/or context and track record in engagement.

- Commitment from the patient and/or stakeholder communities to be involved in the project and clear patient and/or stakeholder involvement/leadership in all stages of the proposed work.

- Evaluation metrics for assessing the success of engagement strategies.

- Plans for sustainability/next steps after the project period has ended. Future funding from PCORI should not be assumed. If the project does not lend itself to sustained activities after the project period concludes, provide justification.
• If using or adopting a PCORI-funded engagement tool or resource:
  o Description of the engagement tool(s) or resource(s) selected and justification for its continued and expanded use. Provide information about prior use/implementation of the tool(s) or resource(s), including any data on its effectiveness to build capacity for patient and stakeholder engagement in PCOR/CER.
  o Approval to use and, if applicable, adapt tool(s) and resource(s) from the relevant copyright owner of the tool(s) and/or resource(s) in the form of a written letter of support with the full proposal submission. This will typically be from the awardee institution of the original PCORI award. The relevant owner must grant the applicant rights to the engagement tool(s)/resource(s) sufficient to carry out the project.

IV. Project Evaluation

Applicants must include a completed Evaluation Reporting Tool as a deliverable at the end of the project period. The Evaluation Reporting Tool provides a template to collect information about Engagement Awards that can help with evaluation of our portfolio, as well as evaluation of individual projects. This reporting tool should be taken into consideration during proposal development and uploaded at the end of the project period with the Final Deliverable Milestone. Awardees may use a different evaluation framework if there is one that is more aligned with their project proposal, subject to PCORI approval. Applicants adopting such an approach must identify the proposed alternate evaluation framework in their application.

The goal of this reporting tool is to ensure a standard set of reported information for Engagement Awards. Given the difficulty in applying metrics and a standard set of indicators around engagement best practices, this tool provides a baseline of outcomes to report on in Engagement Award projects.

At a minimum, evaluation plans should document the reach (in absolute numbers) of the engagement effort among the targeted end users and settings.
V. Review Process

Applying for this award is a one-stage process unlike applying for other Engagement Awards. A full proposal is required at the time of submission. An LOI is not required. Specific requirements and guidance to complete a successful application are found in the full funding announcement, submission instructions, and submission checklist.

Proposals must be submitted by the application deadline of May 24, 2021 at 5 pm ET. PCORI may request additional information from the applicant after the initial review of the full proposal. PCORI aims to provide a final programmatic approval decision on the full proposal, via email, within 10 weeks of the application deadline. If the full proposal is programmatically approved, a PCORI staff member will coordinate arrangements to begin budgetary review and contracting negotiations.

To select high-quality patient-centered projects, PCORI’s Engagement and Contract Management and Administration teams and internal and external subject matter experts (as necessary) will review all applications.

Review Criteria:

1. Program Fit
2. Project Plan and Timeline
3. Qualifications of the Project Lead, Personnel, and Organizational Capabilities
4. Patient and Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Collaborators
5. Past Performance
6. Budget/Cost Proposal

For additional details on the review process, click here.
VI. How to Apply

1. Read the full funding announcement
2. Follow the process outlined in the Submission Instructions; A Letter of Intent (LOI) is not required for this PFA.
3. Submit an Application

VII. Applicant Resources

Special Cycle 2021 Resources

- Applicant Office Hours (Session 1): March 8, 2021 – 12:00-12:30 pm ET
- Applicant Office Hours (Session 2): March 22, 2021 – 12:00-12:30 pm ET
- Applicant Office Hours (Session 3): April 12, 2021 – 12:00-1:00 pm ET
- Submission Instructions

Preparing Your Application

- Special Cycle: COVID-19 PFA (PDF)
- Submission Instructions
- Submission Checklist
- Applicant FAQs
- PCORI Online: Pre-award User Guides
- Review Process

Required Application Templates

- Biosketch Template
- Budget Template (12- to 18-Month Project)
- Budget Justification Template (12- to 18-Month Project)
- Milestone/Deliverable Table Template (12- to 18-Month Project)
- Project Workplan and Timeline Template (Special Cycle: COVID-19)
- Board of Directors Template
Additional Applicant Resources

- Funded Projects Portfolio: Engagement in Research
- Evaluation Reporting Tool Template (for Awarded Projects)
- Glossary
- Cost Principles: Description of Allowable Direct Costs under a PCORI Award
- Standard Contracts for Engagement Award Projects

VIII. Questions?

If you have any additional questions, please contact PCORI at ea@pcori.org or (202) 370-9312. PCORI will provide a response within three business days.