PCORI grants: dos and don’ts from a reviewer’s perspective

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Strategizing PCORI Grant Applications

• Different focus compared to NIH

• Essential to check PCORI website for areas of interest and priority conditions

• PCORI Mission:
  – 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
  – Remember this when writing grant proposal
PCORI National Priorities for PCOR

• Assessment of Prevention, Diagnosis, and Treatment Options
• Improving Healthcare Systems
• Communication and Dissemination
• Addressing Disparities
• Accelerating Patient-Centered and Methodological Research

Before beginning application

• May want to contact PCORI to discuss proposal and whether it will fit into their agenda
• Identify relevant stakeholders
  – Example – breast cancer population
    • Breast cancer patients, possibly also caregivers
    • General surgeons who do breast surgery, oncologists, radiation oncologists, plastic surgeons (reconstruction)
    • Nurses in breast health clinic
    • Others if relevant (e.g., social work)
    • Advocacy group (e.g., Komen, American Cancer Society)
• Need to show input from these groups in your application
PCORI Study Sections

• Individual standing panels for each national research priority area except Assessment prevention (n=2)
• Rosters not currently available since standing panels not complete (still adding members)
• Scientific members very diverse - include clinicians, epidemiologists, behavioral scientists, biostatisticians
• Take into account in writing application
  – Don’t forget a conceptual diagram!
  – If clinical work also describe in lay language
Reviewers

• **Scientific Reviewers** - members of health/healthcare research communities with technical or specialized research backgrounds.

• **Patient and other Stakeholder Reviewers** - patients, caregivers, clinicians, others with interest in healthcare.
  
  – Patient Reviewers: patients, caregivers/family members, patient/caregiver advocate (serve in patient advocacy role on behalf of individual or organization)
  
  – Other Stakeholder Reviewers: clinician (e.g., nurse, physician, or organization that represents clinicians), clinic, hospital, or health system (or organization that represents them), purchaser (e.g., employer), payer (e.g., insurer), industry (e.g., device/pharmaceutical company), research organization, policy maker, or training institution
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification*</th>
<th>Patient and Other Stakeholder Reviewers</th>
<th>Scientific Reviewers</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Representative roles</strong></td>
<td>Patients, caregivers, clinicians, providers, purchasers, payers, industry, policymakers, and educational institution and advocacy group representatives</td>
<td>Members of the health and healthcare research communities.</td>
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| **Experience** | • Experience with health and health care as a patient, practitioner, payer, policymaker, or member of representative organizations. Experience may also include:  
  • Firsthand experience in service, advocacy, policy-setting, or other similar activities in the healthcare system or with healthcare-related organization.  
  • Demonstrated involvement in community-based initiatives involving representation of the interests and perspectives of patients/family/caregiver/advocates (e.g., service on boards or committees), relevant publications, or presentations.  
  • Past participation in decision-making bodies at a national, state, or local level. | • Advanced degrees in the sciences.  
• Technical or specialized research expertise in one or more program areas funded by PCORI.  
• Prior experience writing and/or reviewing research applications.  
• Experience that generally includes conducting independent research and publishing peer-reviewed articles. |
| **Interest** | Ability to represent a patient perspective is the overriding criteria governing selection of patient and caregiver reviewers. | Interest in health and health care, familiarity with health care and science-related issues, or formal training in these areas. |
PCORI Review

• Grant applications go through administrative review

• Grant applications sent to reviewers for preliminary scoring

• In-person review – applications discussed by
  – 2 scientific reviewers
  – 2 patient, other stakeholder reviewers

• Patient and other stakeholders not required to read the research plan
  – Focus on impact, patient-centeredness, and patient stakeholder engagement
Proposal Review

• Applications scored on 9-point scale (same as NIH)

• Scored on basis of:
  1. Impact of condition on the health of individuals and populations**
  2. Potential to improve health care and outcomes
  3. Technical merit
  4. Patient-centeredness**
  5. Patient and stakeholder engagement**

**Patients/other stakeholders review

• Methods section review has different criteria

Patient/Stakeholder Engagement is Crucial

• Patient/stakeholder engagement requires demonstration of active engagement at the time of grant submission
  – Identify patients and relevant stakeholders before/during writing of grant
  – Solicit their input and incorporate information in application (e.g., surveys, focus group)
  – Letters of support very important (written by patient in their own words)
  – Patients and stakeholders must be compensated and listed in budget
  – Remember – patients/stakeholders must be involved in all aspects of the study
Tips (personal opinion)

• Spend time looking at PCORI website for methodology standards, etc. relevant to your research
• Discuss disparities, inequality in access, as appropriate – are important topics to PCORI
• Include a conceptual diagram!
• If not funded, contact PCORI and find out what will make your application better from their perspective
  – Address all comments of reviewers in your resubmission introduction