



November 19, 2021

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Nakela L. Cook, MD, MPH  
Executive Director  
Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)  
1828 L Street, NW, Suite 900  
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*Submitted via e-mail (SoE-RFI@pcori.org)*

***Re: PCORI Request for Information: Science of Engagement Funding Initiative***

Dear Dr. Cook:

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) about the Science of Engagement Funding Initiative.

The AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) is a nonprofit association dedicated to transforming health through medical education, health care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members are all 155 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; approximately 400 teaching hospitals and health systems, including Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 70 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and the millions of individuals employed across academic medicine, including more than 186,000 full-time faculty members, 94,000 medical students, 145,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences.

The AAMC appreciates PCORI's ongoing commitment to advancing engagement and we support conducting research that examines effective engagement methods and impact. The AAMC founded the Center for Health Justice in 2021, and its goal is for all communities to have an opportunity to thrive — a goal that reaches well beyond medical care. Achieving health justice means addressing the common roots of injustices and implementing policies and practices that are explicitly oriented toward equity. The Center for Health Justice partners with public health and community-based organizations, government and health care entities, the private sector, community leaders, and community members to build a case for health justice through research, analysis, and expertise. For more information, visit [aamchealthjustice.org](http://aamchealthjustice.org).

As PCORI explores launching the Science of Engagement Funding Initiative, we provide the following general comments:

**Research benefits from partnerships, stakeholder engagement, and community collaborations, and building trust is essential.**

Advancements in comparative clinical effectiveness research (CER) enable patients and caregivers to make informed decisions about treatments. Patients and communities should be included as partners throughout the research process—from developing research objectives and research questions, to analyzing results and implementing evidence-based strategies into practice. Community involvement resulting in meaningful, collaborative partnerships is essential for developing trust. The AAMC encourages PCORI and its grantees to explore and utilize the [AAMC Center for Health Justice’s Principles of Trustworthiness toolkit](#) as a resource for organizations to demonstrate they are worthy of their community’s trust.

**Engagement should be conducted in a culturally humble and sensitive manner.**

Engagement studies should include populations from diverse backgrounds, specifically those who have been traditionally underrepresented in medical research. Additionally, any engagement should include strategies for collaborating with non-English speakers, individuals with low-literacy, and those who speak English as a second language. The value in partnering with community organizations is that they have an awareness of how to best communicate and connect with those who would benefit from research participation. Finally, funding recipients should be required to share findings with study participants, research partners, and other interested stakeholders throughout key stages of the research.

**Future funding opportunities should align with PCORI’s National Priorities for Health as well as other initiatives.**

We recommend that the Science of Engagement funding initiative should align with PCORI’s National Priorities for Health as well as with PCORI’s forthcoming Research Agenda. The AAMC has voiced support for PCORI’s strategic planning process<sup>1</sup> and we recommend that PCORI identify ways to incorporate this initiative into its larger research portfolio. Additionally, we encourage PCORI to collaborate and coordinate with federal health agencies and other organizations interested in the science of engagement in research.

**The importance of promoting connections between organizations, communities, and qualified researchers.**

This future funding initiative should require applicants to identify multi-disciplinary teams composed of partners from across health care and community settings. Specifically, a portion of the budget should be dedicated to supporting their work. It is also important to highlight the value of collaborating across various sites or with other research teams, as outcomes will vary depending on the population studied, the particular research setting, and other variables.

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<sup>1</sup> See AAMC Comment Letter, [PCORI’s National Priorities for Health: Proposed Priorities for Public Comment](#) (August 27, 2021).

In summary, the AAMC supports PCORI as it explores the Science of Engagement Initiative. We are happy to help serve as a resource to PCORI as you develop these ideas further, and we can also share relevant information with our members and community partners.

If you have any questions regarding this response, please feel free to contact me or my colleagues, Anne Berry, Lead Specialist, Implementation Research and Policy ([aberry@aamc.org](mailto:aberry@aamc.org)), or Olufunmilayo Makinde, Health Equity Research Analyst ([omakinde@aamc.org](mailto:omakinde@aamc.org)).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ross McKinney, Jr., MD". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Ross McKinney, Jr., MD  
Chief Scientific Officer