Leidos Health Case Study

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute
Development and Implementation of a Patient–Stakeholder Engagement Program

With over 20 years of experience in support of the Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs, as well as similar efforts, Leidos Health’s Life Sciences team utilized its technical acumen to implement a scientific review program for patients and stakeholders.

CUSTOMER PROFILE
The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) is authorized by Congress to conduct research to provide up-to-date evidence that may help patients and their healthcare providers make more informed decisions. Information gained from PCORI’s research affords individuals a greater understanding of current prevention, treatment, and care options, and the science that supports those options. PCORI’s mission is to help people make informed healthcare decisions and improve 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. This is closely tied to PCORI’s vision of helping to ensure that patients and the public have the information they need to make decisions that reflect their desired health outcomes.

SITUATION ANALYSIS
As a new organization authorized to fund clinical comparative effective research, PCORI pooled its resources to implement a new scientific merit review process that effectively includes both scientists and patients/stakeholders in a 50:50 ratio for the review of contract applications. PCORI’s challenge was to quickly develop and implement a dynamic program that could successfully recruit, vet, train, and evaluate patients and stakeholders so they could effectively participate in the review of hundreds of scientific application submissions within the first six months of the program—PCORI expected thousands of applications in its first year.

OUR SOLUTION
In support of PCORI’s endeavor, Leidos Health was tasked with launching a program to prepare patients and stakeholders to work alongside scientific researchers in application review. The project required the development of policies and procedures, the establishment of roles and responsibilities, and the creation of critical tools to support and maintain the program. Setup also involved the establishment of a customer service help desk, as well as the recruitment, vetting, and evaluation of program participants. Tailored training materials and sessions were also required to launch and sustain a highly efficient and effective program.

To help ensure program success, the Life Sciences team first gained a firm understanding of the roles expected of patients and stakeholders. This was followed by an understanding and monitoring of performance drivers, control and standardization of processes, development and optimization of a customer relationship management system, implementation of training
management tools, and collaboration across the organization to effectively manage goals and priorities. With these objectives, the team led a three-month initiative in four phases:

**Phase I: Assessment**
The project kicked off with a rapid two-week assessment of organizational goals, existing resources, comparable engagement programs, and projected workflow. The Life Sciences team identified areas of opportunities, potential barriers, relevant assessment tools, and individual roles and assignments. Through a comprehensive audit of the full merit-review cycle, appropriate policies and procedures, people, and technology were put in place to ensure success.

**Phase II: Setup**
Leidos Health focused on the following key requirements:

- Recruitment, vetting, and assessing potential reviewers’ experience, skills and training needs
- Extensive training using a wide range of tools including teleconferencing, video conferencing, and social media
- Customer service help desk to support recruitment and reviewers
- Evaluation tools, including a variety of surveys and informal focus groups

**Phase III: Launch**
With the key requirements in place, PCORI and Leidos Health were prepared to launch the program; an outreach and marketing campaign commenced to recruit hundreds of potential patient and stakeholder reviewers. Internally, a committee was established to assess all potential reviewers, and those invited to participate underwent an extensive training program led by trainers with expertise in adult education. The help desk was activated to answer questions.

**Phase IV: Evaluation**
Proper evaluation should not occur only at the end of a program, but throughout the entire cycle. Therefore, Leidos Health’s Life Sciences team implemented a dynamic evaluation program, soliciting a wide range of meaningful feedback. Utilizing surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews, the team made adjustments within weeks—sometimes days—of receiving feedback. Active listening and nimble responsiveness created a collaborative culture that encouraged everyone involved to share their best ideas.

**RESULTS**
During the first year, more than 1,000 patients and stakeholders were contacted, and over 300 were recruited and trained to participate in PCORI’s review of applications. Almost all participants have said they would like to participate again, and more than half have expressed interest in becoming more involved with PCORI. The enthusiasm and commitment expressed are quite palpable, and as expressed by one patient reviewer, “What PCORI is doing with its research is empowering patients to be a part of the research questions that are important for their quality of life and care over the long term.”
While patients and stakeholders have been part of the research enterprise for many years, PCORI is breaking new ground through the sheer magnitude of their endeavor. By including patients and stakeholders in the entire review process, PCORI is creating an unprecedented level of accountability to ensure that patient-centered outcomes research is truly “patient-centered.”

About the authors

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