ACGME Pursuing Excellence in Clinical Learning Environments Request for Proposal (RFP) Guidance for the Pathway Innovators

The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) announces a new initiative – Pursuing Excellence in Clinical Learning Environments (Pursuing Excellence) - to promote transformative improvement in the clinical learning environments of ACGME-accredited institutions. The ACGME believes that transformation will require alignment and integration of health care delivery system operations and graduate medical education (GME) programs and activities, and that this will in turn lead to measurable improvement in both learner experience and patient care. With ACGME support, the initiative will bring together innovators, including organizational leaders, faculty members, and residents/fellows, to catalyze shared learning and accelerate change.

Key dates
• Proposal due May 4, 2016, 5:00 p.m. Central Time
• Applicants receive notification June 30, 2016
• Public announcement of selected sites July 6, 2016
• Award start date September 1, 2016

Opportunity description

The ACGME is seeking Sponsoring Institutions willing to embark on a four-year journey of innovation. Selected applicants will form the foundation of Pursuing Excellence as part of the Pathway Innovators. All ACGME-accredited Sponsoring Institutions are eligible to apply. Each applicant will be asked to select one participating hospital or medical center in which to focus their initial efforts. While the expectation is that the designated institutional officials (DIOs) will take the lead on submissions, it is not a requirement for application.

Principal Aim of Pursuing Excellence

The overarching aim of Pursuing Excellence is to bring together leaders from hospitals, medical centers, GME programs, and other stakeholders to generate ideas and test innovative approaches to improve the quality of clinical learning environments and patient care.

Pursuing Excellence will build a community of leaders that motivate, support, and spread innovation within their own organizations, and inspire efforts to transform clinical learning environments nationally. To achieve this, Pursuing Excellence will:
• Support Sponsoring Institutions to enhance the operations and culture, for every member of their clinical learning environment to achieve exceptional patient outcomes, experience, and quality and value of care.

• Facilitate efforts to equip executive leaders, faculty members, resident and fellow physicians, and other learners with the capability and capacity to drive superior patient care and learning outcomes.

Background

The Clinical Learning Environment Review (CLER) Program was established in 2012 and is designed to provide US teaching hospitals, medical centers, health systems, and other clinical settings affiliated with ACGME-accredited institutions with periodic feedback that addresses the following six focus areas: patient safety; health care quality; care transitions; supervision; fatigue management and mitigation and duty hours; and professionalism. The feedback provided by the CLER Program is intended to improve how clinical sites engage resident and fellow physicians in learning to provide safe, high quality patient care.

From 2012-2015, the ACGME conducted nearly 300 CLER site visits. These visits have led to four themes that are described in the CLER National Report of Findings 2016:

• Clinical learning environments vary in their approach to and capacity for addressing patient safety and health care quality, and the degree to which they engage residents and fellows in these areas.

• Clinical learning environments vary in their approach to implementing GME. In many clinical learning environments, GME is largely developed and implemented independently of the organization’s other areas of strategic planning and focus.

• Clinical learning environments vary in the extent to which they invest in continually educating, training, and integrating faculty members and program directors in the areas of health care quality, patient safety, and other systems-based initiatives.

• Clinical learning environments vary in the degree to which they coordinate and implement educational resources across the health care professions.

The lessons learned from the first set of visits revealed opportunities for the GME community to work more closely with the clinical sites to enhance learning while also improving patient care. Critical to this process is peer-to-peer learning systems to share successful practices throughout the clinical learning environment community.

Pursuing Excellence will facilitate shared learning to generate new models of integration between health care delivery systems and GME that will enable educators to develop programs that prepare physicians to practice in the rapidly changing health care delivery environment and improve patient care.

Ultimately this will accelerate progress towards high value care that is more effective, safe, timely, patient-centered, and equitable. Patients will benefit from safer, higher quality, interprofessional care, and physician learners emerging from these programs.
will be prime candidates for the organization’s workforce. Organizations that achieve the aims of Pursuing Excellence will be more proficient at navigating the evolving value-based payment environment and likely changes in federal training oversight and payment, as currently envisaged.

General Guidelines

The ACGME is seeking up to eight ACGME-accredited Sponsoring Institutions to join the four-year initiative. Each applicant must select one participating hospital or medical center in which to focus their initial efforts.

Attributes of potential applicants for Pursuing Excellence:

Organizations that are best suited for the Pursuing Excellence Pathway Innovators will need to secure support and resources from the clinical learning environment’s governance and leadership to foster behavioral, structural, and process changes as described in this RFP; have experience in the use of systems-based improvement strategies for implementing and spreading innovative approaches to improving the clinical learning environment; and demonstrated experience engaging residents/fellows, faculty members, clinicians, and interprofessional teams to address systems-based issues. They must also show a willingness to collaborate with the other institutions in the collaborative to co-design a package of models and approaches to affect high-leverage change.

Expectations of selected Sponsoring Institutions include:

- Identify and maintain a Pursuing Excellence core team of GME and executive health care leadership, assign a day-to-day project manager, and engage an improvement coach and local evaluator.
- Actively participate in three collaborative meetings annually throughout the four-year initiative.
- Commit to having the CEO and member of the hospital or medical center’s governance (e.g., Board of Directors) participate in a Leadership Track within the Pursuing Excellence initiative that will meet once a year.
- Obtain approval from the relevant Institutional Review Board, as appropriate.
- Maintain a status of Continued Accreditation for the Sponsoring Institution and all accredited residency and fellowship programs throughout the duration of the collaborative.
- Consent to the collaborative cooperative agreement.
- Consent to share limited intellectual property rights, including the right to jointly publish collaboration outcomes, with the ACGME.
- Submit semi-annual progress reports to the ACGME, including demonstration of how ACGME funding is being used to support innovation and shared learning.
- Use awarded funds only for eligible costs.
• Participate in ongoing self-evaluation, measurement, and reporting, as well as participation in a national assessment conducted by the ACGME.
• Share aggregate and/or de-identified data with other members of the collaborative.
• Host at least one collaborative meeting during the course of the four-year initiative.
• Share learning more broadly as part of the ACGME’s efforts to spread successful innovations developed through the collaborative.

Request for Proposal Timeline

• The ACGME will receive questions from prospective applicants from February 29, 2016 through April 29, 2016 by e-mail to pei@acgme.org. The ACGME will distribute all questions and answers via e-mail to all those who submitted questions.

• The ACGME will conduct informational webinars for interested organizations on March 10, 2016 and April 25, 2016.

• Applications are due by May 4, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. Central Time.

• The ACGME will announce awards on July 6, 2016.

• The ACGME’s Innovation Collaborative Forum will take place September 19-21, 2016.
APPLICATION

I. Applicant Information

1. Application Title:

2. Sponsoring Institution
   a) Name
   b) Address:
   c) ACGME Sponsor Code:
   d) Name of Primary Contact for Application:
   e) E-mail:
   f) Phone:
   g) Attach an organizational chart for the Sponsoring Institution

3. Hospital, or Medical Center Name if not the same as the Sponsoring Institution
   a) Name of Hospital/Medical Center:
   b) ACGME ID Number:
   c) Type of ownership:
   d) Attach an organizational chart for the clinical site
II. Applicant Leads and Teams

The following section seeks information about the co-leaders for this application as well as members of a Project Team and Steering Committee for the local initiative. Biosketches should be no more than one page narratives providing background on each individual. For those that have an NIH biosketch, that would be acceptable.

CLE Innovation Team Co-Leaders

4. DIO
   a) Name:
   b) E-mail:
   c) Phone:
   d) Biosketch:
   e) DIO Statement of Interest:

5. Hospital/Medical Center CEO
   a) Name:
   b) E-mail:
   c) Phone:
   d) Biosketch:
   e) CEO Statement of Interest:

CLE Steering Committee Members

In addition to the co-leaders, applicants are expected to establish a Steering Committee, including but not limited to members in specific roles deemed critical to achieving the goals of Pursuing Excellence. This committee will oversee progress toward stated goals, as well as provide resources and support as needed.

6. Member (up to six)
   a) Name:
   b) Role is pick list – CNO, CMO, Board Member, Resident/Fellow, Chief Patient Safety/Quality Officer, Dean of Medical School, Other
   c) Biosketch attached Y/N

Key Staff

The following identify key organizational resources needed to support the expectations of participation in the Pursuing Excellence initiative. Along with administrative support, applicants should demonstrate coaching and evaluation capacity available at the local level, or note that they would like to use a portion of the award funds to engage these resources.

Improvement Coach - ensure that in-house experts are available to implement and perpetuate transformation by supplying tools and resources, as well as ongoing mentoring and peer support, to maximize learning and retention.
Evaluator - will develop local measurements from the objectives to assess progress and how objectives were accomplished with the intention of improving the value or effectiveness of the organization. They will also draw lessons from completed activities to inform the collaborative.

12. Administrative Coordinator
   a) Name:
   b) Biosketch attached Y/N

13. Local Improvement Coach
   a) Name:
   b) Description of role with Pursuing Excellence:
   c) Biosketch attached Y/N
   d) Will acquire if selected

14. Local Evaluation Support
   a) Yes, local coach listed below
   b) No, will engage a local coach as part of the initiative
   c) Name:
   d) Description of role with Pursuing Excellence:
   e) Biosketch attached Y/N
   f) Will acquire if selected
III. Initiative Narrative

15. Describe your Sponsoring Institution’s efforts to improve in the six CLER focus areas in the last year. (Limit response to 500 words.)

16. The overarching aim of Pursuing Excellence is to bring together leaders from hospitals, medical centers, GME programs, and other stakeholders to generate ideas and test innovative approaches to improve the quality of clinical learning environments and patient care — a transformation that includes, at a minimum, the integration of health care delivery operations and graduate medical education activities. How does the ACGME’s vision of the collaborative align with your hospital or medical center’s vision and strategic priorities? (Limit response to 200 words.)

17. The ACGME’s CLER visits resulted in four main themes that informed development of the Pursuing Excellence Initiative:

1. Clinical Learning Environments and Resident Engagement in Patient Safety and Health Care Quality - Clinical learning environments vary in their approach to and capacity for addressing patient safety and health care quality, and the degree to which they engage residents and fellows in these areas.

2. Role of GME in Clinical Learning Environments’ Strategic Planning - Clinical learning environments vary in their approach to implementing GME. In many clinical learning environments, GME is largely developed and implemented independently of the organization’s other areas of strategic planning and focus.

3. Faculty Skills and Knowledge in Patient Safety and Health Care Quality - Clinical learning environments vary in the extent to which they invest in continually educating, training, and integrating faculty members and program directors in the areas of health care quality, patient safety, and other systems-based initiatives.

4. Educational Resources Leveraged for Interprofessionals Development - Clinical learning environments vary in the degree to which they coordinate and implement educational resources across the health care professions.

The ACGME expects that over the course of the initiative, organizations participating in Pursuing Excellence will work to address all of these themes to achieve transformative change. For the purposes of this application, please elaborate on your approach to one of these themes so that the ACGME can have a sense of your approach. Circle one of the four themes above.

(Limit response to 800 words.)

a) Briefly describe how the theme applies to your clinical learning environment, including recently completed improvement efforts.
b) For the selected theme, briefly describe one innovation that your team plans to test as part of this initiative. How will the innovation be tested, evaluated, and refined?

c) If the initial test is successful, describe how your team will implement, sustain, and spread it more broadly to other clinical learning environments.

18. Recognizing that measurement frameworks for monitoring progress and evaluating the impact of Pursuing Excellence will develop over time, please offer some initial ideas for how your team would measure progress toward addressing the selected finding. (Limit response to 250 words.)

19. Briefly describe the main factors in your clinical learning environment that will facilitate your team’s work in Pursuing Excellence. (Limit response to 200 words.)

20. Briefly describe the potential challenges that may affect your team’s work in Pursuing Excellence and how you will address them. (Limit response to 200 words.)

21. If your Sponsoring Institution is affiliated with a medical school, describe how the leadership of that medical school will be integrated into your team efforts. (Limit response to 200 words.)

22. If the hospital or medical center participating in this application is affiliated with a larger health system, describe how the leadership of that larger health system will be integrated into your team efforts. (Limit response to 200 words.)

23. If applicable, please describe any special skills or expertise that your team might contribute to the larger effort of this national collaborative. (Limit response to 250 words.)
IV. Budget Instructions and Forms

Budget

Please provide a detailed budget for each year of requested funding. Download and complete the Budget Form, convert it to a PDF, and then attach it to the application using the upload button below.

Applicants may request up to $75,000 per year.

Applicants must also contribute matching funds equal to or greater than the amount requested per year, and indicate their proposed distribution on the Budget Form. The match may be obtained from the ACGME Sponsoring Institution or the participating site selected to partner in this effort.

Budget Justification

A detailed budget justification must accompany the Budget Form. The justification should explain how the funds for each line item on the budget will be spent and how the amount was determined – including explanations of any changes from year to year. For each of these items, please clarify any matching funds contributions. There is no specific form for this document. Please use 12-point font and 1-inch margins, convert the document to a PDF, and upload using the online application.

Budget Guidelines

Personnel

Please include the name, title, percent effort, base annual salary, and fringe benefits for each individual in the budget and describe his/her responsibilities with regard to the proposed work on the Pursuing Excellence initiative.

For purposes of this proposal, exclude the effort and associated salary of the co-leaders (e.g., DIO, CEO).

State the fringe benefit rate and describe the components that comprise it (e.g., health insurance, retirement plans, etc.).

Salary Limitation

The ACGME limits the salary amount that may be awarded by this grant. Award funds may not be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of $185,100 based on the NIH Executive Level II salary of Federal Executive Pay. This amount reflects an individual’s base salary exclusive of fringe benefits. If an individual’s base salary is more
than $185,100 per year plus fringe benefits, then that person's salary should be adjusted to $185,100 on the budget form and noted in the budget narrative.

**Consultants**

Provide the names, affiliations, and qualifications of any consultants. Provide the expected rate of compensation and total fees, and describe the services to be provided. If the consultant is not yet identified, provide a description of desired expertise and scope of work.

**Improvement Coaches and Local Evaluation Expertise**

Each application must devote a portion of the funds (up to 30 percent of the total funds) to support an improvement coach and local evaluator. If the expertise is not available within your organization, you may engage the services of a consultant.

- **Improvement Coach** - ensure that in-house experts are available to implement and perpetuate transformation by supplying tools and resources, as well as ongoing mentoring and peer support, to maximize learning and retention.

- **Evaluator** - will develop local measurements from the objectives to assess progress and how objectives were accomplished with the intention of improving the value or effectiveness of the organization. They will also draw lessons from completed activities to inform the collaborative.

**Travel**

Specify costs associated with local and long distance travel, and indicate how they relate to the proposed work. Please budget for travelling a minimum of four persons to participate in three *Pursuing Excellence* collaborative meetings per year. For local travel, list the mileage rate and expected number of miles. For all travel, indicate the number of trips, number of persons traveling, and destination. Include in the narrative a breakdown of the estimated costs for each component of the trip (coach airfare, lodging, meals/per diem, ground transportation). Daily commuting costs of routine local travel and international travel are not allowed.

**Meetings**

Applicants may allocate up to $1,000 per year to support local meeting expenses (e.g., room rentals, refreshments).

**Equipment**

**In year one only**, funds may be used for the purchase of a single computer, printer, and software applications for the sole use of work outlined in this proposal (e.g., project management, data collection, data analysis).

If other equipment is necessary, please provide an explanation of the equipment, how it relates to the project objectives, and a description of the personnel who would use the
equipment. Equipment costs should not exceed two percent of the total four-year award without written approval of the ACGME.

**Supplies**

Specify the type of supplies needed (e.g., office supplies, books, other materials) and estimated costs.

**Subcontracts**

Where subcontracts are requested, applicants are responsible for ensuring their organization has in place an established and adequate procurement system with fully developed written procedures for awarding and monitoring all contracts. Applicants must provide a clear explanation of the purpose of each contract, how the costs were estimated, and specific contract deliverables.

**Other**

Describe any costs that do not fit into any other category listed.

**Indirect Costs/Overhead**

None. Applicants may not use ACGME funds or matching funds to cover indirect costs or overhead.

**Restrictions:**

Funds may not be used for:

- Political activities or lobbying
- Religious activities
- International travel
- Ongoing general operating expenses, indirect costs, or overhead
- Capital expenses, including construction or renovation
- Fundraising expenses
- Medical or pharmaceutical supplies
- Loans and tuition
- Alcoholic beverages

**Fund Disbursement**

If your organization is selected, the ACGME will award funds to support the Year One budget upon execution of a contract agreement and notification of Internal Review Board approval. Funds will be disbursed in a single annual installment. The timeline to start the contract is September 1, 2016. To renew the contract in subsequent years, your organization must provide a comprehensive progress report and a detailed work plan and budget for the upcoming year annually by July 1. Upon review of the progress
report, work plan and budget, the ACGME may approve funds for the subsequent year of the project, subject to the satisfactory progress of the awardee as deemed by the ACGME and the availability of funds.
V. Letters of Support

Applicants may submit up to four letters of support at a minimum two letters that include the clinical site leadership and Sponsoring Institution leadership. Letters should not exceed two pages.

Please use 12-point font and 1-inch margins, convert the document to a PDF, and upload using the online application.

VI. Application Evaluation Criteria

To be considered responsive to this RFP, each applicant must answer all of the questions, and ensure that each answer does not exceed the specified length noted by the question number. This includes indication if a question does not apply.

Based on submission of all required information and requested documentation an application will be deemed responsive or non-responsive. Non-responsive applications will not be considered.

This is a competitive award process. Awards will be based on the strength of the proposal and the needs of the Pursuing Excellence initiative. Preference will be given to proposals that are strategic in focus and demonstrate a high level commitment from the leadership of the Sponsoring Institution and its partnering hospital or medical center.

The most competitive applications will be scheduled for site visits prior to the final award announcement. Site visits will be one day in length and scheduled between May 31, 2016-June 17, 2016. The site visit will be scored separately from the application. Selection for site visit does not guarantee award.

Announcement of the awardees will take place on July 6, 2016. All decisions are final.