

Engagement Voucher Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are there any resources to help me with developing my engagement voucher application?

The Patient and Community Engagement in Research (PaCER) program has the following resources to assist with applications. Keep in mind, applicants *are required* to have a consultation with PaCER staff who can provide additional guidance.

- Proposals funded under the previous iteration of the engagement voucher program can be found [here](#)
- [Methods of Patient & Public Engagement: A Guide](#)
- [Measuring What Matters for Advancing the Science and Practice of Engagement](#)

2. Community partners are eligible to apply for an engagement voucher award. How are community partners defined?

A community is a group of people connected by a common interest, location, or identity. A community partner is an individual or organization within a community who may fairly represent their interests, needs, and/or concerns because they are both knowledgeable about and empowered to represent that community. To be eligible for an engagement voucher, community partners must be actively partnering with a research team at UNC-Chapel Hill or NC Partner Institutions (NC State University, N.C. A&T). This means that they are engaged in collaborative work to guide and inform a current research study.

3. I submitted an engagement voucher application, but I wasn't funded. Can I resubmit?

Yes, applicants are limited to one resubmission per proposal (i.e., an original submission and one resubmission). We recommend that you meet with PaCER staff to discuss how best to address the reviewers' comments then submit a summary detailing amendments and improvements to the original proposal. Applicants can request a voucher consult through the "Start a Request" link on the [TraCS home page](#).

4. Are Principal Investigators and institutions from outside the TraCS partner institutions allowed?

No, to be eligible to serve as Principal Investigator, applicants must be affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill, NC State University, or N.C. A&T.

5. Do I have to include TraCS services in my budget?

Voucher awardees must incorporate contracted TraCS engagement services into their projects. These services will be provided in-kind. The nature and extent of the assistance to be provided by TraCS engagement staff **must** be discussed with the program that will be providing the service prior to submission. Any agreements must be included in the voucher application. PaCER staff can assist applicants in navigating this process.

6. What about engaging partners in international projects?

We are unable to process payments to individuals or organizations outside of the United States. As a result, engagement vouchers cannot be used to support partnerships with entities outside the US.

7. What can awardees expect in terms of TraCS assistance post-award?

Financial administration of funded vouchers must be handled by the PI’s primary department. NC TraCS will transfer the funds upon award; any remaining funds must be returned to NC TraCS upon completion of the voucher award period. NC TraCS may be periodically asked for updates on fund expenditures.

8. Can engagement voucher funds be used to support Principal Investigators or Co-Investigator salary?

No, salary support cannot be budgeted for them, or research support personnel such as GRAs, technicians, and other research staff.

9. Will I need to apply for IRB approval for my engagement activities?

Full protocol [IRB](#) (Institutional Review Board) submission is usually not required for engagement activities. However, funded proposals will be required to have a Not Human Subjects Research (NHSR) determination from the UNC IRB for the planned engagement activities before voucher activities can begin. If the application is focused on developing or testing innovative or novel approaches (e.g., comparative methods, evaluation) that contribute to the evidence base related to the impact of engagement in research, full protocol IRB submission will likely be required.

10. Do my engagement activities need to begin as soon as I learn that my voucher application has been approved?

No, you may select a start date once we send you an official Notice of Award.

11. How is engagement different from research?

Indicators of a research project	Indicators of an engagement project
The goal is to collect data & produce generalizable knowledge	The goal is to work collaboratively with partners to enhance the quality of the research project
Participants are "studied"	People are partners in the research process
The project must be approved or deemed exempt by the Institutional Review Board (IRB)	Engagement is not considered research, but research teams may pursue a “Not Human Subjects Research” determination from the IRB
Research participants complete the informed consent process	Generally, no informed consent process
Individuals receive incentive for participation	Individuals are compensated for time & expertise similar to consultants

There are some key differences between research participation and research engagement, especially when we think about goals and processes. When conducting research, a researcher’s goal is often to collect data and produce generalizable knowledge. Participation is usually more unidirectional, meaning the researchers are sharing information about a study with someone who then chooses whether or not they want to participate. Typically, a research project is approved or deemed exempt by an IRB, participants complete an informed consent process before enrolling, and they receive some sort of incentive for participation.

Engagement in research is often more bidirectional, or like a discussion. People involved in engagement activities aren't participants in the research. They are partners who contribute to the

research process by providing their perspective and ensuring that the research is important and acceptable to people like them. Unlike a research project, engagement is not considered "human subjects research", since the goal of engagement is to gather information that will ultimately inform research priorities, study design, implementation, or dissemination strategies. Because of this, engagement activities are deemed NHSR by the IRB, there is generally no informed consent process (instead, researchers might have a memorandum of understanding or collaborative agreement to outline roles & responsibilities), and partners who work with researchers are compensated for the time and expertise they dedicate to the study which usually involves a higher rate of compensation and different payment process.

12. What are "science of engagement" projects and are they considered research?

Yes, science of engagement projects are research! Specifically, they are projects focused on developing or testing innovative or novel approaches that contribute to the evidence base related to the impact of engagement in research. For example, they can include projects focused on the development or testing of measures to capture the structure, process, or outcomes of engagement in research; the development or testing of engagement methods to determine the most effective approaches for engagement; or exploration of how effective methods should be adapted or resourced for different contexts. These types of projects generally do require full protocol IRB submission.