POD STRUCTURE FEEDBACK REPORT

REDCap Survey Administered: <u>January 4 - January 11, 2018</u>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the direction of NCATS and the CTSA Program Consortium Steering Committee, CLIC performed an online survey to elicit feedback on the "CTSA Program pods". Questions addressed the current pod call structure and value of the pod calls, what has been working well, what could be improved, and recommendations for changing or improving these calls. The survey was sent via email to email to the CTSA Program PI and Administrative Listserves (with two reminder emails) and collected via REDCap. There were 68 respondents from 53 unique hubs (out of 64 total hubs under current funding and no-cost extension) for a final response rate of 82.81%. Most variables had valid data for 66 respondents.

In general, the pod call structure was rated favorably, but with a range of responses from negative to positive. Common themes were 1) to establish and increase bi-directional communication, 2) to have more PI input to Steering Committee and NCATS agendas, and 3) improve the structure of pod membership, e.g., determined by region or interest, be more self-governing, be more structured. Several unique recommendations for these two common themes were offered.

This report summarizes survey results for the quantifiable items (e.g., ratings, categories), as well as the common themes and specific recommendations gleaned from open-ended responses.

SUMMARY

A. Respondents:

A total of 66 individuals responded.

PIs (Pod leaders and Pod members) made up 74.2% of the 66 respondents
    "Identify yourself" (n=66)
    PI - Pod leader (14, 21.2%), PI - Pod member (35, 53.0%), Administrator (15, 22.7%), Other (2, 3.0%)

More than 2/3 of the 66 respondents stated they held monthly pod calls.
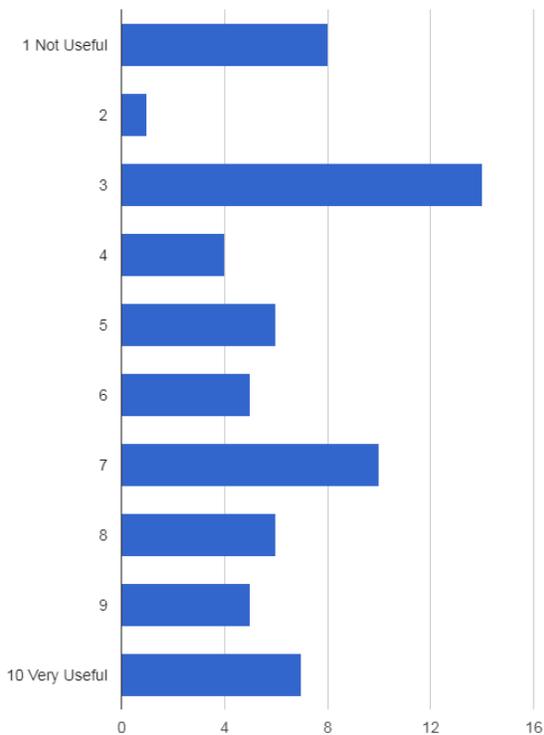   Do you attend pod calls?
    1   Yes, monthly (45, 68.2%), 2 Ad hoc/when needed (16, 24.2%), 3 No, we do not have pod calls (5, 7.6%)

B. Pod usefulness:

There was quite a bit of variance among the responders as to their opinions of how useful the pod calls are.

How useful are the pods? Where 1=Not Useful, and 10=Very Useful (n=66)

Not Useful   1 (8, 12.1%),   2 (1, 1.5%),   3 (14, 21.2%)
                   4 (4, 6.1%),   5 (6, 9.1%),   6 (5, 7.6%),
                   7 (10, 15.2%),   8 (6, 9.1%),   9 (5, 7.6%),
Very Useful 10 (7, 10.6%)

Full Sample   Mean = 5.47 (SD=2.87)
  PI Pod leader   Mean = 5.50 (SD=2.20)
  PI Pod member Mean = 5.77 (SD=2.89)
  Administrator   Mean = 4.93 (SD=3.53)

Sample positive quotes:

Very useful in context of informal but very open updates of steering committee and NCATS activities and initiatives and very frank and honest discussion of the specific context and impact of such activities for the CTSA Program hubs

Recently, we have found them more helpful when there is specific feedback we can provide to the SC or the leadership.

I have asked my pod about their level of satisfaction, whether the pod "works", etc. and they have been uniformly positive.
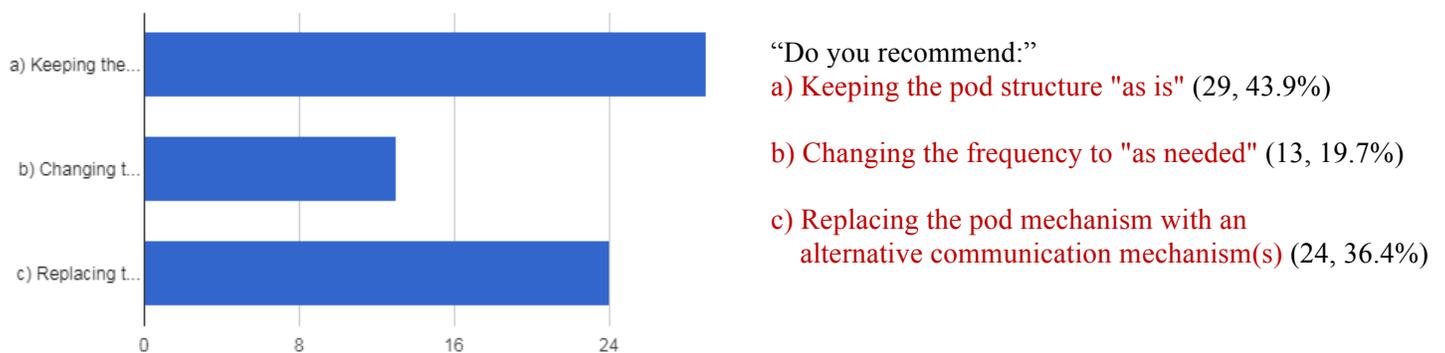
Sample negative quotes:

> *Not very effective so far. Information was shared, not sure if any actions resulted*

> *People are very busy and competing demands tend to take precedence - no good solution for that.*

C. Pod structure feedback:

There was variability in responses to whether the pod structure should be kept, changed, or replaced. Nearly 2/3 recommended keeping it "as is" or changing the frequency to "as needed" vs. replacing the pod mechanism.

"Do you recommend:"
a) Keeping the pod structure "as is" (29, 43.9%)

b) Changing the frequency to "as needed" (13, 19.7%)

c) Replacing the pod mechanism with an alternative communication mechanism(s) (24, 36.4%)

Sample quotes:

> *Some system in which the pods do more than just transmit information from the SC meetings. Can they be used to help the hubs work together?*

> *...open session with all PIs and Admins participation every two months to start with. Open discussion and updates with material sent beforehand.*

> *I have even sometimes thought a call wasn't needed but then when we got on, the other PIs brought up important issues for discussion.*

> *One consideration may be an asynchronous blog-like platform at the level of the National Consortium.*

> *Web based input to steering committee and CTSA Program leadership to be discussed at steering committee meetings.*

> *How about using something like the NIH "on-line study section" system? The pod leader would put some information or some discussion questions on a web site that would be accessible by Pod members. There would then be a ~3 day window to reply, and generate a back/forth online discussion.*

I would keep pods but make then more consistent with some of the 'natural aggregations' that have sprung up. They need to feel like they are actually heard and responded to.

D. New plans:

Item # 7 asked for an open-ended response. It was worded, "Now that the Steering Committee will hold executive sessions and the SC meeting materials (slides and meeting summaries) will be uploaded to the CLIC website, do you anticipate the pods will become a more effective structure in communicating the events of the SC calls to the consortium?"

Sample quotes:

No. The pods are excellent at disseminating information, but that's it.

Steering Committee summaries from CLIC will be a more effective way to communicate the content of the Steering Committee. The pods serve different purposes

May require standardize process at national level for SC and NCATS intake of pod feedback and ideas, and a clear system for bottom-up ideas to be nurtured and embraced at the SC and national level.

I think our POD feels that the PODS should actually have input into the meetings BEFORE they happen as well as after. They appreciate the meeting summaries, but again, that sets up a passive/recipient role for the hubs as opposed to active participation.

I think there will continue to be a lot of variation - a few very functional pods, but most not being closely engaged.

No - the role of pods will need to extend beyond merely communicating issues from steering committee - must be a forum for bidirectional communications.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

A. Positive Themes

Pod calls are useful for news, clarifications, discussing changes in the consortium, responding to NCATS requests.

Open dialogue, sharing, problem-solving among colleagues / peers was frequently cited as positive and very valuable. The focus can often include complaining, but people appreciate the collegiality and support ("therapeutic" / "cathartic" themes mentioned a few times). However, this was frequently accompanied by a negative sentiment (see below) - even when generally supportive of pod calls - which is the frustration of feeling they are only passive recipients of information from SC / NCATS during these calls.

PIs like to provide feedback to SC. However, this works best when information flow is bi-directional - from SC to pods, and includes issues raised by PIs.

Organized and highly engaged pods are viewed more positively. Structured meeting times, structured agendas, prompt meeting notes, good leadership.

The new strategy of posting SC meeting notes, summaries, slides, etc. is seen as positive because everyone will have access to the same information.

B. Negative Themes

One-way info from SC to pods is viewed negatively. The pods were meant to have information flow up and make a difference, but most felt that it was very unclear whether complaints, advice, input is heard or acted upon by NCATS.

PIs want more input into program direction and more input into SC meeting agendas.

Infrequent, missed or ad-hoc calls make the system less effective.

People appreciate being able to listen in to SC meetings, and feel that losing this access is bad.

COMMON THEMES

A. **Common Theme 1: Needs to be more bi-directional communication with SC, including input. Allow pods to contribute to future SC meetings and agendas, and give feedback to SC prior to such meetings, suggest topics, etc.**

Specific Recommendations:

Have a "ticketing" system whereby topics raised in pod calls, meant for the SC, will be tracked and at least discussed, and some level of feedback will be provided. This would reassure PIs that their feedback has been heard.

Minutes of each SC meeting developed centrally and sent to all CTSI PIs at least 3 days before pod calls.

Have more structured agendas.

In addition to the SC system, the PODs could function like focus groups to develop the concerns and possible solutions to problems as envisaged by PIs.

Open sessions with all PIs and Admins every 2 months, with material sent beforehand.
Streamline communication via CLIC.

B. <u>Common Theme 2</u>: **Several respondents suggested self-organization - such as to have pod members choose or elect the SC member or create pods based on common interests. They feel the Pod membership structure is confusing - pod membership should be developed from more naturally occurring shared interests / affiliations / regions / time-zones.**

Specific Recommendations:

PIs should rotate on the SC less frequently (e.g., every 3 years) rather than being reshuffled every year as the SC member changes.

SC members should act as representatives for the interests of their pods.

Coach pod leaders to better facilitate meetings and how to handle specific member issues (take the discussion offline if a member goes "off the rail" on the call; add members' specific issues to future calls).

Have active admin KFCs again. Some still do this because they found it so valuable.

Specific "Electronic" Recommendations:

Multiple formats for communication: polling, newsletters, web posting, town halls, groups, leverage DTFs for feedback and conversation to engage consortium.

Replace pods with an asynchronous blog-like platform at the level of the National Consortium.

Web based input to SC and CTSA Program leadership to be discussed at SC meetings.

Monthly SC updates via teleconference.

Email alerts from CLIC for disseminating important information.

Use a ListServe of just PIs.
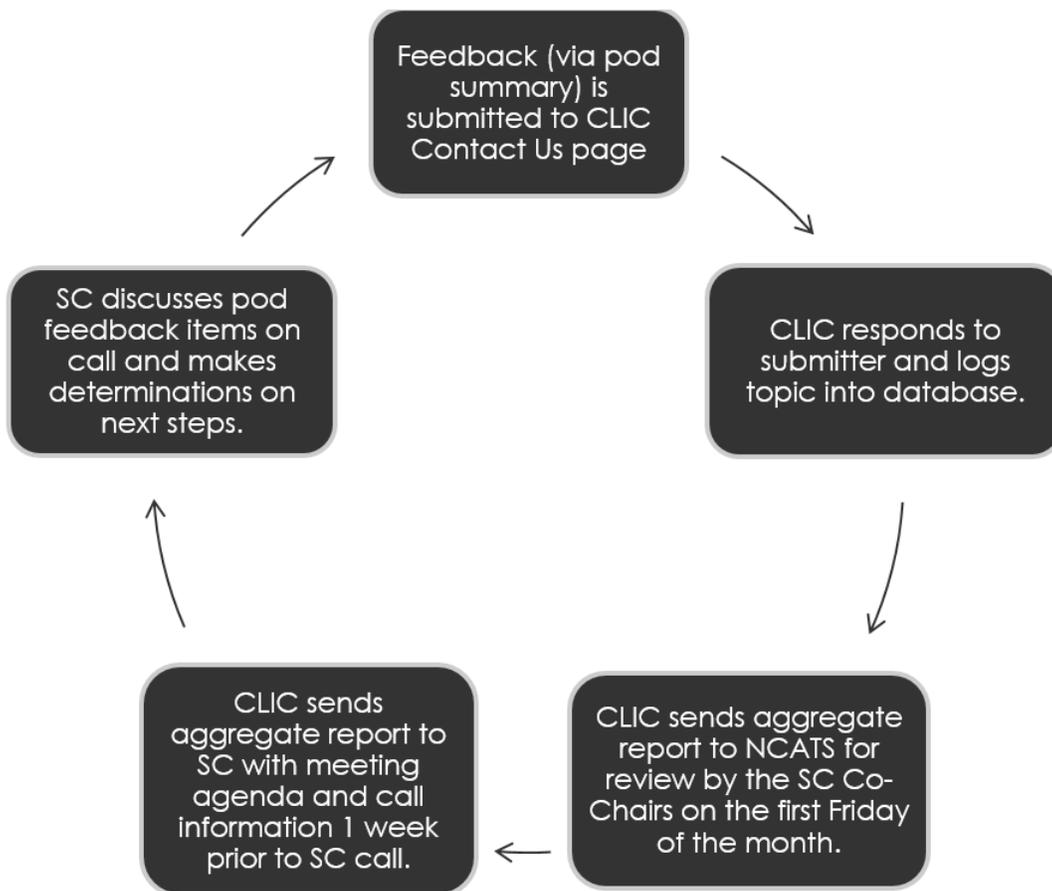
Have more / updated FAQs.

STEERING COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The Communications Workgroup to the Steering Committee reviewed this report on January 31, 2018.
This full CTSA Program Steering Committee reviewed this report on February 12, 2018.

The Steering Committee has decided to move forward with the following:
- Pods to continue to hold calls preferably 1-2 months or every 4-6 weeks.
- Pods can determine their own recurrence that works best for their pod group.
- See proposed pod feedback structure below.
- NCATS will add dedicated time on the agenda to review pod feedback on SC calls.

POD FEEDBACK STRUCTURE

Feedback (via pod summary) is submitted to CLIC Contact Us page

CLIC responds to submitter and logs topic into database.

CLIC sends aggregate report to NCATS for review by the SC Co-Chairs on the first Friday of the month.

CLIC sends aggregate report to SC with meeting agenda and call information 1 week prior to SC call.

SC discusses pod feedback items on call and makes determinations on next steps.

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