

2020 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: November 24, 2020 (3 p.m. ET)

Full Proposal Deadline: April 7, 2021 (3 p.m. ET)



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Policies for Action

Public Policy Research to Advance Racial Equity and Racial Justice

BACKGROUND

To help applicants understand how we are using some terms in this call for proposals, see the FAQs in the online application for further clarification.

For more than 45 years, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has worked with others to address the major health and health care issues of our time. From its inception, RWJF's work has been driven by a continuous cycle of research, evaluation, and learning. RWJF's commitment to advancing a bold research agenda helps bring evidence to bear on some of the most complex health and policy issues facing the United States today.

RWJF's vision of a Culture of Health is rooted in our collective belief that everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to be healthier. As part of this broad vision, RWJF recognizes the significant role that racism has played and continues to play in the American landscape, undergirding entrenched policies and practices that shape virtually every aspect of life, opportunity, and well-being across the country. These policies systematically and intentionally advantage certain groups while disadvantaging others—and are often at the heart of inequalities in the health, well-being, and survival observed among racialized groups of people and places.

As our country continues to suffer from the COVID-19 pandemic and historic and contemporary anti-Black violence, more people are now coming to understand what Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities have long known and experienced: that the effects of racism in federal, state, and local policies on the lives of minoritized and racially stigmatized groups are profound and enduring. Racism in policies has been shown to disproportionately segregate communities of color and racially stigmatized immigrants from access to opportunity. Such policies can make it more difficult for people of color and immigrants to secure quality housing, health care, early care and education, and wealth and income. In short, these injustices undermine the idea and the reality of a society in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthy.

Achieving racial equity and racial justice in the United States requires a sustained, multipronged intersectional policy approach that addresses not only the immediate social conditions leading to poor health outcomes, but also the [long-standing structures](#) that can foster such conditions. Progress can be made toward this overarching vision by transforming policies to expand access and opportunities.

THE PROGRAM

The goal of this Policies for Action (P4A) call for proposals (CFP) is to build the evidence base about how national, state, and local policies can decrease racial inequities in health and well-being in the United States.

The research funded under this CFP must: (1) focus on studying the potential impact of a specific federal, state, or local policy; (2) be intentional about maintaining a focus on racial equity and racial justice in its processes and outcomes; (3) use principles of [equitable evaluation](#); (4) incorporate meaningful and authentic community engagement into the work; and (5) advance community-driven solutions that come from the groups of people most directly impacted by structural racism. For this CFP, we also encourage, but do not require, that the proposed research examines the impact of policy changes on health and well-being outcomes.

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Methods and designs that have been successful in the past vary and include natural experiments; implementation research; microsimulation studies; randomized controlled trials; linkages and analyses of existing data sources; mixed-methods analyses; and qualitative research. Various data sources can be proposed to be analyzed, such as social service and other public records; restricted-access survey or administrative data; social media data; and marketing data. Given that it can take a long time to gain access to restricted data, preference will be given to investigators who already have access to any restricted-use data proposed, as well as data that is disaggregated by race/ethnicity and relevant subgroups. Investigators may also propose research that would serve as a continuation or supplement to other existing programs or research studies.

We offer the following research questions to illustrate appropriate topics and priority areas that will fill in existing research gaps. **This list is not exhaustive** and applicants are encouraged to submit proposals on other relevant and related topics and questions.

- What is the impact of policies that have been intended to address structural racism in the social safety net, public health, and health care systems?
- How do new Medicaid waivers impact racial equity and racial justice?
- What is the impact of policies designed to reduce residential segregation, including strategies to invest heavily in places that have been subjected to historical redlining and other forms of systemic disinvestment? What is the impact of policies that address structural racism in the U.S. housing system?
- What are the effects of policies designed to increase wealth for BIPOC families and communities on the racial wealth gap?
- What is the impact of policies designed to reduce educational segregation and improve access in early childhood care and education?
- What **bold remedies** are cities, counties, and states considering that are explicitly designed to reduce structural racism or its pernicious effects? How are these policies being implemented and what are their impacts on racial equity? What can we learn from efforts to pilot solutions? We are also interested in projects that model the impact of these bold policies.
- What is the impact of policies that have been put in place to promote racial equity in addressing the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic in health care, housing, and education, including access to technology for remotely accessing health care and education?
- What is the impact of race equity principles or racial equity tools used by state and local governments on how policies are developed and implemented?
- What is the impact of pre-emption laws on racial equity?

We support research that generates actionable evidence and information about how, and how well policies work. We would like research findings to guide legislators; public agencies; public policy advocates; grassroots organizers; and other stakeholders developing and implementing policies to create equitable communities. In addition to carrying out the proposed research activities, each applicant funded under the P4A program will:

- Work and periodically check in with RWJF program officers, the P4A national coordinating center (NCC) at the Urban Institute, and other P4A investigators to identify and leverage potential synergies across research projects and to disseminate results broadly;
- Actively participate in research collaboration, dissemination, and translation activities organized by RWJF and the NCC, including research-in-progress webinars, blog posts, podcasts, research meetings, and policy briefings;

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- Attend RWJF's Annual 4Action Conference and Sharing Knowledge conference each year the grant is active.

TOTAL AWARDS

- Approximately \$2 million will be awarded through this CFP.
- There is not an explicit range for allowable budget requests. You should request the amount of funding you will need to complete your proposed research project and to translate and disseminate the results. The size of the budget will be weighed in relation to the importance and likely contribution of the proposed research, with higher budgets subject to greater scrutiny. Typically, P4A grants are funded at \$250,000 each.
- The duration of awards will be up to 24 months.
- The grant opportunity outlined in this call for proposals is contingent upon final funding confirmation from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for such grants.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Preference will be given to applicants that are either public entities or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and are not private foundations or Type III supporting organizations. The Foundation may require additional documentation.
- Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories.
- Awards will be made to organizations, not to individuals.
- We welcome applications from all investigators. The following are especially encouraged to apply:
 - interdisciplinary research teams;
 - community-partnered research teams;
 - investigators from diverse backgrounds or with diverse life experiences (e.g., race, gender, class origin/first generation college, LGBTQI, disability, ethnicity, national origin);
 - investigators from a wide range of disciplines;
 - first-time applicants for an RWJF grant.

OUR EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITMENT

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is committed to building a Culture of Health that provides everyone in America a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being. Achieving this goal requires focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. To that end, we are committed to fostering diverse perspectives. We recognize that individuals' perspectives are shaped by a host of factors, such as their race, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, age, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, familial status, education, religion, legal status, military service, political affiliation, geography, and other personal and professional experiences.

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We know that the presence of diverse perspectives alone is not sufficient. Therefore, we also are committed to creating inclusive environments where all individuals are encouraged to share their perspectives and experiences. We believe that only through valuing our differences and similarities, and remaining vigilant in advancing equity, will we be able to maintain an equitable workplace and actively pursue equity in all aspects of our work. We commit to being continuous learners and working alongside others to cultivate equity, diversity, and inclusion.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee composed of RWJF staff, leaders of the P4A NCC, P4A's national advisory committee, and other expert reviewers as needed. Final funding decisions are made by RWJF leadership.

Letters of intent will be evaluated based on:

- focus on racial equity and intersectional justice;
- alignment with policy topics described in this solicitation;
- how community engagement is incorporated into the research plan;
- the strength and feasibility of the research design; and
- capacity to translate research into policy action.

In addition to the above, *full proposals* will be evaluated based on:

- the study's research aims, hypothesis, and rationale;
- the proposed methodology and data sources;
- alignment with principles of equitable evaluation. Applicants should demonstrate that they intend to implement approaches that reflect the principles of equitable evaluation whenever possible, including approaches to defining research questions and conducting research;
- the expected results or outcomes (clearly stated, measurable, and achievable within the proposed time frame);
- the approach to dissemination, communication, and translation of research findings for community members, policymakers, practitioners, or other key audiences that may benefit from your research;
- research qualifications and experience of the investigator(s) and appropriateness of disciplines and perspectives represented, including nontraditional partners; and
- proposed budget and project timeline.

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

An independent research group selected and funded by RWJF will conduct an evaluation of the program. As a condition of accepting RWJF funds, we require grantees to participate in the evaluation.

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Grantees are expected to meet RWJF requirements for the submission of narrative and financial reports, as well as periodic information needed for overall project performance monitoring and management. We may ask project directors to participate in periodic meetings and give progress reports on their grants. At the close of each grant, the grantee is expected to provide a written report on the project and its findings suitable for wide dissemination.

APPLICANT SURVEY PROCESS

The Project Director of the proposal may be contacted after the submission deadline by SSRS, an independent research firm. The Project Director will be asked to complete a brief, online survey about the proposal process and applicant characteristics. This voluntary questionnaire will take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Responses provided to SSRS will not impact the funding decision for your proposal in any way.

SSRS will protect the confidentiality of your responses. RWJF will not receive any data that links your name with your survey responses.

USE OF GRANT FUNDS

Grant funds may be used for project staff salaries, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, meetings, supplies, project-related travel, other direct project expenses, including a limited amount of equipment essential to the project, and indirect costs to support the applicant organization's general operations. In keeping with RWJF policy, funds may *not* be used to support clinical trials of unapproved drugs or devices, to construct or renovate facilities, for lobbying, for political activities, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities. Additional budget guidelines are provided in the online application materials.

OPEN ACCESS

In order to ensure RWJF-supported research is made accessible to a wide and diverse audience, grantees who publish findings in peer-reviewed publications must do so in open access journals and/or must include funds in their budgets to cover the cost of making the resulting publications open access (typically \$2,000–\$5,000 per manuscript).

HOW TO APPLY

All proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/p4a4 and use the “Apply Online” link. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at MyRWJF.org before you begin the proposal process.

There are two phases in the competitive proposal process:

Phase 1: Letters of Intent

Applicants must submit a letter of intent of no more than two pages that describes the project and includes the amount of funds requested. Letters of intent will be reviewed by staff at RWJF, the NCC, and external experts. The

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letter of intent should include a brief plan for the proposed project, outlining a clear research question, proposed data/methods, and communications plans.

Phase 2: Full Proposals

Selected Phase 1 applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal of no more than 10 pages accompanied by a detailed budget, budget narrative, and additional information. This program's national advisory committee makes recommendations about grants to Foundation staff, and RWJF will make all final grant decisions.

Please direct inquiries to:

Policies for Action National Coordinating Center
Urban Institute
Email: policies4action@urban.org
Website: www.policiesforaction.org

All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with online submission requirements well before the final submission deadline. Staff may not be able to assist all applicants in the final 24 hours before the submission deadline.

RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

PROGRAM DIRECTION

Direction and technical assistance for this program are provided by the Urban Institute, which serves as the national coordinating center located at:

Policies for Action

Urban Institute
500 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20024
Email: policies4action@urban.org
Website: www.policiesforaction.org

Responsible staff members at the national coordinating center are:

- Lisa Dubay, PhD, *co-director*
- Laudan Aron, MA, *co-director*
- Katie Deming, MS, *deputy director*
- Nyequai Harte, MA, *communications manager*
- Joshua Smith, BA, *program manager*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Mona Shah, PhD, *senior program officer*

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- Brian Quinn, PhD, *associate vice president*
- Alonzo Plough, PhD, *vice president and chief science officer*
- Isabelle Gerard, MPHP, *communications officer*
- Mateusz Szalda, *program financial analyst*

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- **October 21, 2020 (2:30 p.m. ET)**
Optional applicant webinar. Registration is required [through this link](#).
- **November 24, 2020 (3 p.m. ET)***
Deadline for receipt of letters of intent.
- **April 7, 2021 (3 p.m. ET)***
Deadline for receipt of full proposals.

**All letters of intent and proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/p4a4 and use the "Apply Online" link. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at MyRWJF.org before you begin the proposal process. All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with online proposal requirements well before the final submission deadline. Staff may not be able to assist all applicants in the final 24 hours before the submission deadline. In fairness to all applicants, late submissions will not be accepted.*

Late Submissions

RWJF will accept only those proposals that are completed/submitted at the time of the deadline. Because one of our Guiding Principles is to treat everyone with fairness and respect, RWJF's deadline policy applies to all applicants. If an applicant experiences a problem with the online application system that may prevent them from submitting on time, please notify the program administrator immediately. To do so, click on the "Contact Us" link found in the "Resources" area on the left side of most screens within the online proposal site. We encourage you to submit your proposal well before the deadline so that any unforeseen difficulties, e.g., technical problems, may be addressed in advance.

ABOUT THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

For more than 45 years, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are working alongside others to build a national Culture of Health that provides everyone in America a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being. For more information, visit rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at www.rwjf.org/facebook.

Sign up to receive email alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at www.rwjf.org/manage-your-subscriptions.html.

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